

Power as Resource: The Dao, Architecture and Alleviating the Crisis of Urbanity

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Power as Resource: The Dao, Architecture and Alleviating the Crisis of Urbanity

We certify that we have read this Doctorate Project and that, in our opinion, it is satisfactory in scope and quality in fulfillment as a Doctorate Project for the degree of Doctor of Architecture in the School of Architecture, University of Hawai'i at Manoa.

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Abstract

This dissertation looks at some concepts and strategies from Daoist texts to see whether they can apply to alleviating the crisis of urbanity stemming from architectural space-making and spatial organizations. It studies four sites in the cities of Shanghai and New York to see how these concepts and strategies are manifested.

These Daoist concepts and strategies point to ‘power as resource’ in the practice of space making and spatial organization. While ‘power as control’ is more evident in urban planning and design from the top down perspective (of policies and authorities), power as resource is more subtle and can be appropriated by doing planning and architecture from the bottom up perspective (of users and usage) of open urban public spaces.

The four sites constitute The People’s Park and Xintiandi in Shanghai, and Washington Square Park and the High Line in New York City. This auto-ethnographic study shows all four sites to manifest, to a large extent, the Daoist concepts and strategies discussed in this dissertation.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Power as Resource: The Dao, Architecture and Alleviating the Crisis of Urbanity.

Daoism originated in China around 600 BCE and the founding text, the Daodejing (Classic of the Way and Its Power/Virtue), whose author is purported to be Laozi. This slim text contains 81 verses of classical Chinese script which tends to be more poetic and metaphorical than modern standard Chinese, thus yielding to a greater variety of connotations rather than definitive meanings. However, the Daodejing has wielded an immense influence on Daoism and other forms of Chinese thought since the time the text first circulated over two millennia ago. There are two versions of this text which is divided into two sections. One section is a treatise on the Way (*Dao*) and the other is concerned with Power/Virtue/Force (*De*). In the first version discovered before 1972, the first section concerns *Dao* while in the version excavated in 1972 (and dated to be earlier than the first, called the Mawangdui text), *De* forms the first section of the book. Apart from the order of the arrangement of the sections, there are very few minor differences between the two textual versions.

Daoism, however, is a long tradition of Chinese thought and it is not a philosophy in the Western classical sense of a logical or analytical exposition of fixed principles be they social or natural philosophies. It deals with the notions of being in this world or dwelling

and therefore is an exploration of how to live. In this sense, Daoism is more akin to the existential, phenomenological and deconstructive philosophies that the West seems to be concerned with in the 20th and 21st centuries. The German philosopher, Heidegger borrowed a great deal from Daoism in his writings on Being and Non-being. In *On the Way to Language* (1959, transl. 1989:130) he talks about 'Way-making' meaning to 'bring the way... forth first of all and thus to be the way'. The *Daodejing* notes that the Way (Dao) cannot be discoursed, but rather, it is itself the meta-language which is the process or the Way. More recently the French deconstructive philosopher, Jacques Derrida has also dealt with similar ways to Daoism in his deconstruction of classical Western philosophical thought centered on logical, binary systems, mainly with regard to language. Besides being concerned with the question of Being and Change, Daoism has also, through the millennia become associated with rituals, health and medicinal practices.

However, this dissertation is mainly concerned with the Laozi text, the *Daodejing* and an emphasis on transformation or change that is the central concern in the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*), a text predating the Laozi and said to have originated in shamanistic times in China.

At this moment, more than half the world's population lives in urban areas. There is overcrowding in urban spaces with the attending problems in housing, transportation and open-space usage. At the same time, these together with the energy crisis, the looming water shortage, air quality problems and the politics of food production, have put urbanity in crisis. Contemporary architecture needs to attend to its role in the matrix of these problems in the area of space-making. Urban architecture has certainly

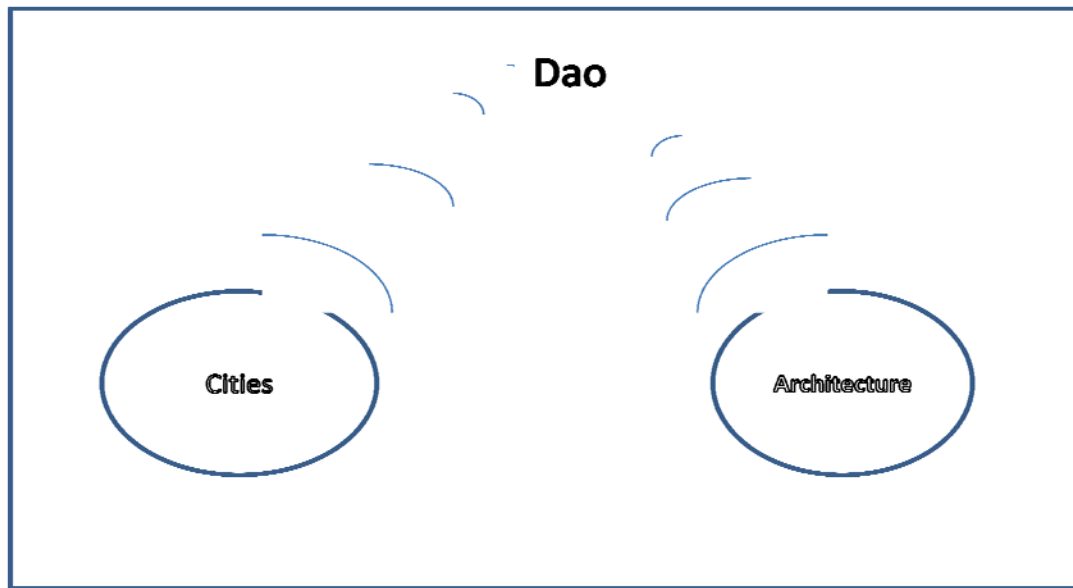
contributed to the crisis. How, then, can it contribute to alleviating this crisis? This dissertation proposes a way (*Dao*) out through the notion of power (*De*) as potential resource, a matrix of power configuration in architectural terms that draws from the transformative versatility of the Dao. What is the Daoist way of attending to space-making and the relationship between the human and landscape, particularly the landscape of the urban?

In the *Yijing*, a core (spiritual-psychological) text associated with Daoism, “*Yi*” represents transformative versatility, a way of creating change through, what I consider to be, power as resource and not power as control. In the *Daodejing*, the central philosophical Daoist text, this power is termed as “*De*” (Virtue/Power/Force/Potentiality). The terms for “power” in both texts constitute an imagination of power (*De*) as a potential force, which can be tapped to provoke change to a crisis in relation to order and hierarchy. In this case, it can be applied to the urban crisis created (by no means, only) through architectural space-making.

In re-imagining this space-making or Way-making, to use Heidegger’s term, we also need to understand the architectural and urban process of creating space and the crisis of urbanity. Can Daoist lenses be used to clarify how such space-making may contribute to urbanity or its crisis? Can contemporary architectural space-making be re-imagined to alleviate the crisis of urbanity through the Dao? How can Daoist power as potentiality/resource work towards alleviating this crisis? How can we mediate this space-making to imaginatively create a way out of this dilemma?

Daoist notions have been used as ‘fengshui’ (site contextual orientation for building construction) in traditional Chinese cultures, whether in China itself or where the Chinese diasporas have lived. However, Daoist strategies have not been applied to urban design or planning even in the last 300 years. Daoism has a particular interest in spatiality. It is concerned with the poetics of Dao (the Way) both as physical reality as in nature and in socio-ethical dimensions. ‘Where is the Way?’ (Graham: 1987). This study would argue that Daoist poetics can make important contribution to five areas in urbanity: 1) in the area of human-nature-landscape/urban environment relationship which puts weight on a balanced harmony, 2) in placing importance on adaptability and flexibility for the spatial and volumetric organization of the built environment, 3) in the area of diversity in the lived and living socio-spatial environment and 4) in the area of multi-perspectival and immersive urbanity. 5) change or transformation with the trace of its original source..

This dissertation traverses the intellectual terrains of urban theory, Daoist philosophy and architecture and urban design. It explores urban socio-spatial operations and the urbanity of particular sites in two cities. It speculates on how we may be able to rethink, through the potential resourcefulness of Daoist *De* different ways of urban space-making and organization. It looks through Daoist lenses how the process of urban design and its product (urban architecture) contribute to the crisis of urbanity or its alleviation.



Daoist Lens through which urbanity and architecture are viewed

This is an auto-ethnographic study that investigates the urban sites in two major world cities: Shanghai in China and New York City in the United States of America. It is auto-ethnographic in the sense that I am both the observer and the one who experience the encounters with these sites. Shanghai is a global Chinese city in a state of flux both in socio-economic organization and in moving in a direction of growth and character towards West. On the other hand, New York, the Western globalized city, is orienting itself towards the East to enhance its economic and financial power. Both cities are comparable in urban size of population, with the greater New York City moving towards over 22 million people, while greater Shanghai is rapidly reaching 20 million. The inner cores of the two cities consist of around nine million each.

This study employs, to some extent, a historical-interpretive framework while also using case studies strategies to study the sites. It draws observations and speculative conclusions about these sites mainly through site visits over the course of one and a

half years. Reference sources include website information including photographs , u-tube videos, library research involving theoretical and academic books on urban material as well as guide books and other popular cultural material in the first part of this dissertation (Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2). In the second part (Chapters 3 to Conclusion), actual site observations were carried out through three time periods to each of the four sites .Chapter 1 explores the notions of the Urban, Urbanity and the crisis of urbanity . It draws on theoretical frameworks, as well as case studies, by scholars of cities, urban spaces and urbanity. Chapter 2 considers the poetics of Daoism and the areas that can be drawn upon to explore the notion of urbanity and the crisis of urbanity.

Chapter 3 focuses on two public urban spaces as samples for investigation in the cities of New York and Shanghai. These two sites are Shanghai's People's Square and New York City's Washington Square. These sites are studied through Daoist lens to explore how they work as public urban .spaces.Chapter 4 examines another two sites which have differing typologies as urban public spaces. These are the Xintiandi complex in Shanghai and the High Line pedestrian way in New York's Manhattan. The Conclusion Chapter sums up the implications of the Daoist concepts and strategies for architecture in relation to alleviating the crisis of urbanity.

Chapter 2

Approaching the City: The Urban, Urbanity and the Crisis of Urbanity

The Urban

The 'urban' refers to 'being of the city' or 'living in the city'. Cities have grown from a few thousand to millions. The primary cause for moving to the city from villages in the countryside is nearly always economic. But what is a 'city' or 'the urban'?

As Gordon Childe (1961) the archaeological scholar of cities notes "the concept of the city is notoriously hard to define." We could say that theories about the city in both its geographic and other spatial senses merely approach what we may consider as the urban and urbanity. According to Childe, cities are 'civilizations', and they are also 'cultural instrumentalities' which humanity has attempted to develop into 'a more inclusive concept of community'. With certain qualifications such as the processes of conducting business and economic transactions in the cities due to the advents of industrialization and more recently advances in telecommunications and digital networks, these (social and economic) criteria are largely relevant. With the advent of the digital revolution which involves the use of telecommunications and computer networking across the world to conduct economic transactions linking various urban centers, cities have become globalized centers.

Urban theorists have also been concerned to note that the 'urban' includes both the social and the spatial organization of its environment in an interlinked and sometimes tightly woven manner. The writers around the mid-20th century were concerned with the context of how the urban is different from the country towns, but were also passionate about the quality of urbanity or mode of life in the cities.

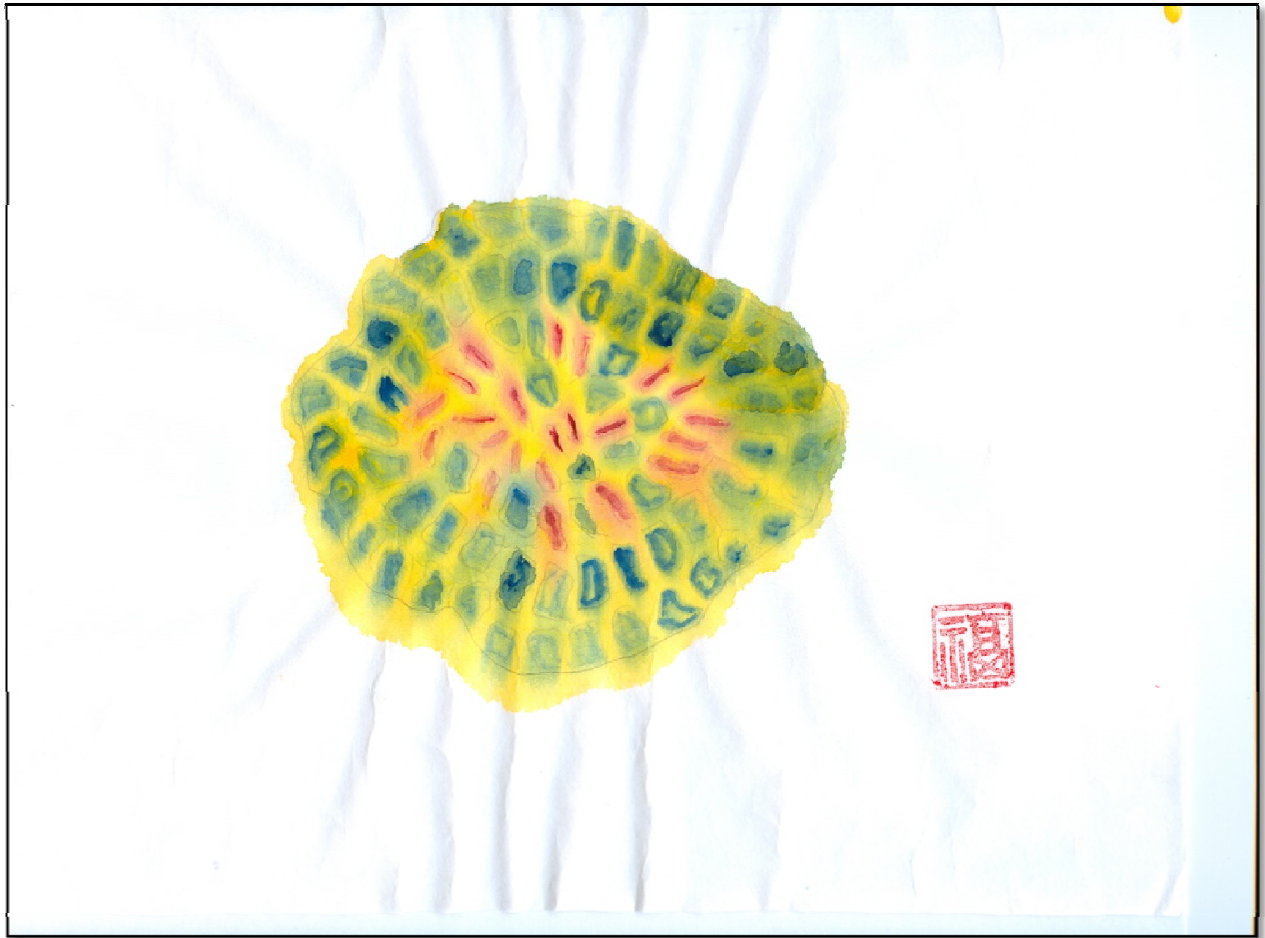
Lewis Mumford (1963) focuses on urban social and cultural life and considers the city as a theater of social interaction, 'a stage for human actors'. The city exists physically on a fixed site with 'durable facilities for assembly, interchange and storage' and its economic and cultural processes depend on the division of labor.

For Mumford the city is 'a geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process, a theater of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of unity. The city fosters art and is art; the city creates the theater and is the theater. It is in the city, the city as theater that man's more purposive activities are focused, and work out, through conflicting and cooperating personalities, events, groups, into more significant culminations.' This urban drama is derived through the focusing and intensification of group activity and essentially distinguishes the city from the countryside.

Jane Jacobs' *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) considers the city as an organized complexity. Urban variables are many but are interrelated into an organic

whole. All factors are interrelated in an organized complexity, not mechanistically or in a disorganized form. From Jacobs' perspective the porosity of streets to neighborhoods and other street vicinities make it impractical to see parts of the city as bounded, but there are urban sections that are lively and active and parts which are 'dead'. She sees urban streets' as having the capability to direct a flow of people and pool them in parks or other public spaces. This she considers to be 'street ballet', (a metaphor that resonates with Mumford's 'urban drama') a vital part of urban life. At the same time, she also thinks of the city in a holistic sense.

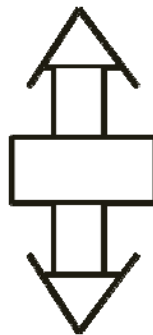
Like many urban theorists before him, in *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) Leo Marx opposes City (the urban) which 'signifies noise, machinery and visual chaos' against the Countryside (the pastoral) which 'signifies visual order, peace and quiet'. Within the city, for Marx, green and public spaces provide for communal gathering and discussion. While 200 years ago, the city represented culture and leisure, the city now represents work and toil. Marx questions whether urbanity can include both spaces for meditation, gathering for communion and work?



City as organized complexity
Watercolor painting by the author

Yinong Xu (in *The Chinese City in Space and Time*, 2000) notes that there is a country-city continuum which has been present until very recently in many urban areas and is still present in some of these areas. He notes that 'in theory during the first half of the imperial period, and in practice from the Song dynasty onward, the Chinese city functioned as an open institution and fostered the development of an urban-rural continuum. Both may jointly have generated a necessary, though not a sufficient, condition for the phenomenon of the free development of prosperous suburbs.' (Xu, 2000, p. 240)

The earliest Chinese references to a city are found on oracle bone or bronze vessel inscriptions from the second millennium BCE. The pictograph below depicts a walled city:



(Taken from Steinhardt: 1990: fig.24.)

Three Chinese words *cheng*, *du* and *jing* are most commonly translated into English as 'city'. *Cheng* refers to city wall; *du* is an imperial city and *jing* is capital. In China a city can be the location of more than one government office from the national down to local

level. The status of a city and its administrative jurisdiction could change in dynastic times (Steinhardt, 1990: 26 -27).

In another context while discussing Beijing as an imperial city, (Zhu, Chinese Spatial Strategies) says:

There is a lack of interest in staging a front, a high and large façade. Without that, there is no tendency to project the mass of the building forward and upward. In the end, there is an absence of the object or objecthood. Underlying all this is a fundamental absence of universal light and openness as they were emerging in post-Renaissance Europe. Without all these, at a physical level, but also metaphysically, there is no distancing between the eye and the world. There is no distinction, no confrontation, between subject and object. There is no Cartesian confrontation... There is no finality of form as a basis of the beautiful and the sublime. (2004: 242).

Henri Lefebvre (1974), on the other hand, critiques past theories which proposes that the city be considered as a whole, as an 'organism'. He, rather, considers the city as 'a *mediation* among mediations' situated at an interface of what he calls 'the *near order* (relations of individuals in groups of variable size, more or less organized and structured and the relations of these groups among themselves)' and 'the *far order* ' which is 'abstract, formal, supra-sensible and transcending in appearances' and 'includes moral and legal principles'. The city thus contains *the near order* in its 'practico-reality' (what

we may call its material and practical basis) and 'supports' this *order* and 'maintains relations of production and property' and 'is a place of their reproduction'. At the same time, the city is itself 'contained in the *far order*' which it also supports and 'projects a terrain (a site) and on a plan. Thus 'the city is an *oeuvre*', and 'has a history' and is created 'under historical conditions'.

Lefebvre's argument in *The Production of Space* (1974) is that space is a social product, or a complex social construction (based on values, and the social production of meanings) implies the shift of the research perspective from space to the processes of its production; the embrace of the multiplicity of spaces that are socially produced and made productive in social practices. To Lefebvre, then, the urban is not merely 'spatial and practico-material', but also contains historical and social layers in a network extending from the immediate to the distant in space and time and encompassing abstract and theoretical concepts. Another metaphor Lefebvre uses is that of the city as having its own rhythm. He uses the term 'rhythmanalysis' to analyze the city (2004). As an 'oeuvre', we can only approach the city in the Lefebvrien sense as a continuing body of work. Lefebvre coined the phrase 'everyday life' in his discussion of the city and to him the city is best approached in terms of the 'everyday' practices of urban life.

It can be noted that Lefebvre's ideas about 'near and far orders' and 'rhythmanalyses' of the city have similarities to Daoist concepts and strategies that can be harnessed for alleviating the crisis (see the following chapter).



City as 'Rhythm'
Watercolor painting by the author

Le Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* takes up the practice of everyday life in the city by introducing the flaneur and his walks around the city to get a sense of the urban life. Le Certeau and other Situationists theorize by experiencing the city from the bottom up, from the perspective of its dwellers and walkers. They were thus more concerned about what the city holds in terms of surprises and mysteries rather than the planned and fixed design of the (then) urban architect or designer who has had a top-down perspective. Again, this is a perspective that has resonances of the Daoist Way.

More recent urban theorists have maintained the city is both porous and not fixed, but could be best described as 'flow' and complexity. The city cannot be theorized as a holistic organism, but more as open and interconnected in various layers in different parts and also to other centers within a country and internationally. Cities should be considered differently from nations as people who live in cities have very much more complex interactions and timelines to take care of in cities than in the countryside where there is more time to do things at leisurely paces.

Building on Lefebvre, Le Certeau and the Situationists, Amin and Thrift (*Cities: Reimagining the Urban*, 2002) relate the ontology of encounters in the city. They consider the urban in terms of 'footprints', 'biopolitics', 'networks', 'layering', 'extensions in time and space', 'transitivity', 'trans-human' relationships, 'machine' 'olioticon' and 'potentialities', besides the structures of bureaucracy, economic production and consumption, and materiality. Above all, the city is open and is constantly 'performing'; it

performs its identity as a city (in Judith butler's terms of gender as a performing identity). That is, the city becomes its identity by its habitual manifestation of its urban operations. To really understand urban spatial performativity one has to 'walk' the sites. I embarked in exploring these sites following Lefebvre and de Certeau's footsteps, so to speak.

The Networked City

Other urban theorists such as Saskia Sassen and Manuel Castells have noted the information age and its impact on urban centers. The information age that allows a network of digital technologies to conduct businesses throughout the world have created global cities where international financial functions are concentrated and whose economies are closely woven with the world economy. The information society is thus another 'revolution' that has replaced industrial age cities where urban centers are agglomerated for production of goods and services.

Saskia Sassen (2001) notes that 'cityness' comprises complexity, density and diversity of people and cultures. There is a convergence of the physical environment at multiple scales with a layering of old and new and 'messy intersections' of activities. According to Sassen, digital technology has not necessary meant the decentralization in urban centers in relation to commerce and financial agglomeration though production and services are more dispersed.. She sees such technologies as enlarging certain centers such as New York and London and also Shanghai, though other urban centers may

decline in terms of size and agglomeration, becoming instead secondary links to these global centers. Such global centers grow to mega-city sizes with over 10 million in population while its downtown centers become increasingly cosmopolitan with globalized, sophisticated urbanites from all over the world whose countries may have established financial and commercial headquarters in these globalized cities. In this expansion of the networked city, urbanity is both physical and technological flow.

Manuel Castells (1972) also writes on the impact of the information society on global cities. By information society Castells means 'a social structure where the sources of economic productivity, cultural hegemony and military power depend, fundamentally, on the capacity to retrieve, store, process and generate information and knowledge'. For him cities are socially determined in their forms and their processes. Some of their determinants are structural, linked to deep trends of social evolution (such as globalization for instance) that transcend geographic or social singularity. He calls this a 'new spatial form characteristic of social practices that dominate and shape the network society: the space of flows' (Castells, 1972: 157)



City as information networks
Watercolor painting by the author

Castells notes that cities are comprised of both 'spaces of flows' and 'spaces of places'. The global logic generates 'spaces of flows' but humans need also to live in 'spaces of places'. These places have some locales whose form, function and meaning are self-contained within the boundaries of physical contiguity and are historically and culturally specific. For Castells the globalization of urban centers have produced an urban elite that is cosmopolitan in tastes and cultural interests that create a demand for a quality of life that would include sophisticated high cultural experiences such as local galleries, museums, concert facilities and up-market restaurants and eating places. At the same time, these urbanites are likely to want to have clean air and environmentally sustainable, but sophisticated habitats. On the other side of the social divide, there would still be low-income, manual workers whose work may consist of servicing the households and offices of the elite. Both Sassen and Castells believe that the economic and cultural divide of these groups constitute a crisis of urbanity. The rich will get richer and have more access to resources while the poor will get poorer with fewer resources, such as affordable housing and urban social spaces.

Thus there are many perspectives and directions (theoretical and otherwise) leading to the concept of the 'urban' and urbanity. At the same time, certain characteristics of the city are noted by all these theorists to be mostly similar everywhere in terms of a physical architectural structure that is monumental, diverse and temporally layered; a socio-economic and political order that are both complex and diverse in terms of both human and trans-human relationships.

Urbanity

The Webster dictionary defines urbanity as 'of the urban' and 'the urban' life as in urban or city life. The urban or city cannot simply be defined as spatial spaces or bounded only by the practico-material. 'Urbanity' must take into account what can be experienced or sensed in the urban. The crisis of urbanity can therefore be said to be some critical or problematic condition adversely affecting urbanity. In Chinese the word 'crisis' comprises two characters which mean 'challenge' and 'opportunity'. The Chinese meaning for this word means 'turning point' which can change for the better or worse. For the Chinese traditionally, any crisis need not be viewed as unsolvable or a cause for pessimism only. In this sense it conveys a spirit of resilience similar to a Daoist take that sees 'De' embedded in Dao, the potential embedded in the being that is changeable..

In Lefebvre's writings, urbanity takes the form of the socio-spatial practices or operations of the city. Lefebvre made a differentiation between 'conceived' and 'lived' space: a dominant space of rational knowledge and political ideology, and a dominated space of direct experience of life with desires expressed through images and symbols. He believed that there was a distinction of the two and a domination of the first over the second in Europe especially since the Renaissance, but he questioned that such a dissection existed in traditional China since a different system of writing was adopted.. For Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space* 'the Chinese characters combine two functions in an inextricable way, that on the one hand they convey the order of the

world,(space-time) while on the other hand they lay hold of that concrete (practical and social) space-time wherein symbolisms hold sway'(1996: 38 -39, 42).

Jianfei Zhu in *Architecture of Modern China* noted that LeFebvre did not observe Chinese urban space as he did European cities, but if we extend Lefebvre's observations, he believed that Chinese cities do not have such a distinction but combined these two spatial orders, the conceived (what I would call the notion of 'the urban') and the lived (what I would delineate as 'urbanity') where perspective and formal geometry do not dominate but instead merge into a messy world of life actually lived. (2003: 217). I believe that the Daoist regard to seeing yin and yang as relational poles rather than binary opposites may account for the blurring of such distinctions. In the Chinese conception of the city the urban and the rural are not binary opposites, but rather constitute the yin and yang of lived space.

Shapiro (2010) considers the City in relation to the notion of a *sensorium* - the phenomena of sounds, sights, touch, smells and taste locatable in the city. This implies that the urban experience both appeals to the senses and contributes to a perception of the 'messy' city. Lefebvre refers to the rhythm of the city and an account of the city would include a 'rhythmanalysis' of the city. For Amin and Thrift, the city invokes 'passions':

We will begin by considering the city as a set of flows by drawing on the Spinozan notion of *passions*. Our intention, first, is to consider the city as a field

of movements; a swirl of forces and intensities, which traverse and bring into relation all kinds of actors, human and non-human, in all manner of combinations of agency. The city becomes a kind of weather system, a rapidly varying distribution of intensities (2002: 32)

Amin and Thrift (2002) go on to counter the notion of a 'seductive' experience of the city to 'think about how cities are orders and this ordering is often exacted through the design of flows as a set of serial encounters which construct particular spaces and times.'

This way of perceiving the city resonates with Lefebvre's 'rhythm' and Shapiro's 'sensorium'. Thus I would consider urbanity as a 'sensitivity', whether it be 'Western' or Chinese, the sense of its socio-spatial dimensions, both physical and non-physical. We could also call it the 'flow' of the 'Dao', a notion I will explore further in the next chapter.

Crisis of Urbanity

According to Ventos (1998) 'the city from which urbanity emerged consists of a balance between different elements that is none too easy to maintain: between concentration and anonymity, between spatiality and identity, between space and time, between form and memory and between recognition and distance'. Ventos feels that the city should be limited but also sufficiently large and concentrated so that the qualities of

‘amorphousness, anonymity and anomie’ can exist with respect for diverse identities and deference to difference without social stiffness or too much intimacy.

Ventos argues that the crisis of urbanity has come from two aspects of the city or urban formations : 1) what he calls ‘segmentation’ and 2) ‘metastasis’. He feels that the internal segmentation of the city, into commercial center, residential nuclei and industrial zoning, has produced spaces that are induce class based prejudices and also lead to a lack of diversity and rich overlays in a complexly diverse organization of spatiality.

Ventos argues that in segmented cities there is a tendency for people not venturing to explore the city because it is dangerous. In some neighborhoods, hyper-density has eliminated porosity and transparency and spawn a tight hierarchy of mobility, while others are vulnerable because of isolation and tend to keep themselves indoors. This could lead to danger or fear. He sees internal segmentation or zoning as inducing ‘a loss of complexity in the urban phenomenon which has meant that the traditional virtues of the city (such as deference and diversity) and its urbanity are now in crisis’. In Daoist terms the flow of *qi* (energy and vitality) has been blocked.

Ventos’ notion of metastasis, which alludes to cancerous growth, lays out the argument that exponential growth of the city in comparison to its surrounding territories means that the city ends up rapidly transforming the spaces around it to serve it, into parks, farms or rubbish tips with purely instrumental functions. ‘The city absorbs the energy of this environment’, reducing its diversity so that the city loses its dialectical relationship with its vicinity , its closing and opening ‘rhythm of any living city’.

Apart from what Ventos considers to be the crisis of urbanity, we can also include such conditions as the disparity between the rich and poor, a gap that is widening in many global cities where shanty towns abound with super sophisticated high-rise apartments and expensive gated mansions. The democratic mingling of a diversity of people is threatened by the architectural stratifications induced by social and economic causes. The wealthy possess an abundance of resources including an information-rich network while the poor fare no better than their economic predecessors who service the factories.

For Pu Miao (2002) the main differences between West and Asian countries including China are the following:

1. High population density
2. Smaller amount of public space
3. Lack of squares
4. Heavier use of public space
5. Pro-development culture in Asian cities..

Pu notes that the European public space such as the Italian plaza is more suited to Europe and the US cities where there is lower population density. The hyper dense environment of Asian pacific cities may need different quality of space arrangement.

Pu says that in recent decades escalating urbanization has exposed several problems for public spaces of Chinese cities such as the following (See Pu, 2002:: 274 -293):

1. More public spaces are needed and the sidewalks of these cities can no longer serve the traditional functions of social gathering spaces as over-congestion make them disorderly and dangerously fluid. The problem includes both the inadequate square footage of public space and the inherent weakness of the linear form of such spaces. Such spaces do not offer a psychological parking space. Parks offer relative tranquility and slower pace of activity.
2. Economic and population booms in China are accompanied by more offices, retail and services. The urban sprawl of retail has become continuous commercial corridors in over-extended megacities. One such example is the E_W Nanjing Lu which extends over 500 meters (1500 feet long) which leads to visual boredom in pedestrians after prolonged walking.
3. Illegibility of the environment as lengthy corridors leaves few significant variations as landmarks in people's memories. Disorientation occurs in street webs extending from one sub-center to another. The uniform spatial system provide no opportunity to create unique public spaces as symbols for communities.
4. At the micro level high density urban life challenges architects and governments to protect adjacent parties' privacy and provide durable public facilities. The Chinese tradition of mixed land use with the current permeation of commercial use subjects in residences in core areas to noises, visual intrusions and other disturbances of street fairs and the like. In addition tight urban spaces push Chinese urban residents to utilize public or semi-public areas in many ways such as peddling wares, bicycle and moped parking on sidewalks. Cooking in alleys or storing personal belongings in condo and apartment corridors, thereby

intensifying existing traffic congestion and accelerating the deterioration of public spaces.

5. Large squares are not the answer.

Urbanity, then, is the notion of the lived experience of the urban environment. There is no way to discretely separate the experience from the environment. What is urban is bound up with the urbanity of the urban space. Urbanity includes material and immaterial things, the visible and the invisible; it is the total living fabric of the city or the urban. It pertains to the mode, quality and potentiality of life that the urban projects.

Chapter 3

The Dao of Urbanity

Daoism has been in China since the 6th Century BCE. Its roots are believed to have gone back even further in time to the Shamanistic period reflected in the *Yijing*. Along with Confucianism (emanating slightly later), it forms the basic philosophical and socio-spiritual foundation of Chinese culture and way of life. Its traces are still present today. The two philosophical-ethical systems share some similarities especially in the importance of the notions of yin-yang and of the 'middle ground'. However, whereas Confucianism is primarily concerned with human relationships and the hierarchy of the human socio-political order, Daoism encompasses all that has to do with living relations to the environment or the world cosmos. Daoism sees human relationships as only part of the cosmic organization which includes all animate and inanimate relationships.

There are a number of Daoist terms which may need translation into English and explained. These include the following culled from various interpretive texts such as Zhang (2002), Zhu (2002) and others (see bibliography):



Dao: Chinese ink brush calligraphy by the author

Daoist Concepts

This thesis is not primarily a discussion about Daoist philosophy but a culling of Daoist concepts that may be applicable to architecture and urbanity. These relevant key concepts from Daoism are as follows:

- *Dao*
- *Qi*
- *Yi*
- *De*
- *Fan/Fu*
- *Yin/Yang*
- *Heaven/Earth*
- *Emptiness or Void*
- *Spontaneity/Nature*

Dao

Dao is commonly translated in English as the “Way”. However, Laozi’s *Daodejing* notes in the opening verse that *Dao* cannot be named specifically. It connotes more an abstract notion, which is invisible but exists.

Dao is the most fundamental concept as an abstract notion that precedes everything including heaven or sky and earth. *Dao* is also ‘the mother of myriad things’. *Dao* holds that the Way is neither being nor ‘beinglessness’. It has both being and beinglessness. It has an unique form of existence. The Way is on the one hand the symbol within the

thing and on the other, what reverts back to nothing. This is to say that the Way has a real presence but it is without form for image. *Dao* is silent.



Qi: Chinese ink brush calligraphy by the author

Qi

Dao, as the 'mother of myriad things', also produces *qi* which is energy manifested both as flow or wave and a thing (object) but cannot actually be seen (invisible). *Qi* is movement, movement without human will. It flows naturally, that is with nature, it moves where it will.

De

In the *Daodejing*, *De* can be seen as power or virtue. This is the virtue of potentiality. It is the power of what can come into being and thus it is the power that enacts change. This virtue is different from the Confucian virtue which can be interpreted as the moral quality of being a benevolent and righteous person. The Daoist virtue is a more cosmic concept which connotes the innate quality of a being or thing that has the power of transformation.

Yi

Yi (change or transformation) is the norm of life. Emphasis in Daoism is on the dynamic, the flux, rather than the static or the unchanging. The only permanent thing in life is change. So Daoism takes change as what is the usual condition of the living and even of the inanimate world.

Fan/Fu

Fan in classical Chinese has the meaning of both 'return to the original source' or reversal. *Fu* bears the same meaning and together this emphasizes the important Daoist notion of remembering the source of what exists at present. It constitutes memory and identity. Daoist world view suggests that a present state could in future revert back and hence transformation into something new bears the trace of the past and growth can revert to decay.

Yin/Yang

This is the concept of opposites linked in complementary positions. *Yin* is shadow which shows up *Yang*, the light. Without one there is not the other and yet one is also the opposite of the other. In architecture one can speak of the yin and the yang of spaces, buildings in terms of light and shadows and of solid and void.

Heaven/Earth

These two concepts constitute the Daoist universe, so that everything is either covered by Heaven (Sky) or on Earth. Heaven and Earth put all things on the same level, that is, everything in nature exists without hierarchy, unlike the Confucian ethos which posits humans at the center and human benevolence and righteousness as the prime virtues (a humanist ethics). Daoist Heaven regards humans as 'straw dogs', not particularly different from all other beings. The Daoist sage knows this and so does not patronize all existence with benevolence or righteousness. Heaven and Earth create the ecology of life, no more, no less.

Emptiness or Void

In Daoist theory, emptiness or void is seen as central to functionality. Thus the vessel is useful because of its empty space and the spokes of the wheel act in the emptiness of its context.

Being/Beinglessness

In the Daoist world, being and beinglessness are complementary, that is, being comes from non-being and being may return to beinglessness.

Spontaneity/Nature

This is the quality that Daoism sees in nature and to be spontaneous is to be natural and to follow the Way. Spontaneity is seen as a quality to be sought in the sage. In the sage wisdom is spontaneous. Spontaneity can be translated as 'of itself'. Thus the Laozi states:

Humans imitate the earth; the earth imitates heaven; heaven imitates the Way; the Way imitates what is of itself. (Laozi:25/ MWD:69)

Esteem of the Way; honoring virtue is not the result of anyone's order but arises of itself (Laozi: 51/ MWD: 14)

They [the sages] support the spontaneity of myriad things and do not dare to actively. (Laozi: 64/ MWD: 27)

Thus, according to the Laozi, spontaneity is not just an appropriate human quality but is the true nature of things. This has had a long history of being at the center of Chinese aesthetics and way of living.

In *Disputers of the Tao* (1989), A C Graham notes the Daoist concern with spatiality, movement and direction: Daoist concern is with 'Where is the Way?' and not 'What is the Way?' as in Western philosophy which is concerned more with 'What is Reality?' and with 'Being'. He observes that *Dao* in the text of Laozi (*Daodejing*) is concerned with the dissolution of boundaries while naming produces fixity. Thus, calling *Tao/Dao* by naming it does not make it more understandable. *Dao* could be the 'Unhewn', One, Mother, or the rest of Myriad Things. He notes that what matters for the conduct of life is the direction which it sets one moving: How to get from here to there. This has implications for alleviating the situation of the crisis of urbanity. How do we strategize to get from critical situations to more positive ones? At the same time, the self is not split off from the spontaneous changing other.

Graham looks at the text as a philosophical poem rather than a more logical treatise as in Zhuangzi's interpretation of the *Tao/Dao*. He sees the poem/philosophical tract as using the strategies of metaphors and ambiguity as modes of expressions. Thus, the notion of 'yielding' is imaged on 'softness' which then suggests 'passivity' which leads to the connotation of a soft foundation from which the active rises. The fundamental

quality of life is softness (the passivity of the sage in not engaging in restless action) or the 'qi' that is engaged in contemplation.

Graham posits a Daoist hierarchy where Nothing/Emptiness (space) is placed above Something and by analogy, the Dao speaks of Water being stronger than Stone or Rock. Thus 'the softest in the world gallops over the hardest in the world'. The emphasis is on space or formlessness and its function.

Graham notes that the reversal in Laozi's text has a modern parallel in Jacques Derrida who deconstructs the chain of binary oppositions underlying the logo-centric tradition of the West. It inverts conventional placings of values. In Laozi, however, differences are not seen as conflicting (as in logo-centric Western philosophy) but as complementary.

At the same time, Daoism also disavows phono-centricity. Thus, the signified and the signifier becomes one. The *Dao* (Way) calls forth the *De* of Potentiality.

What can be noted from the Laozi text is the focus on 'energy', 'flexibility', 'space' and directional strategies which can be appropriated for this project in relation to alleviating the crisis of urbanity. What can be drawn from Daoist texts that 'speak' to urban (architectural and building design, spatial organization and socio-cultural) practices?

There are four areas which we can draw from Daoist poetics. These are:

1. Human-nature-landscape relationship in the urban context
2. Adaptability and Flexibility of the spatial and volumetric organization of the built urban environment.
3. Diversity of the lived and living social environment

4. Multi-perspectival and immersive urbanity
5. Return (Fan/Fu) to the origin or source in conjunction with Transformation (Yi).



Nature: Chinese ink brush painting by the author

Human-Nature-Landscape Relationship in the urban context:

Humans model themselves after Earth

Earth models itself after Heaven

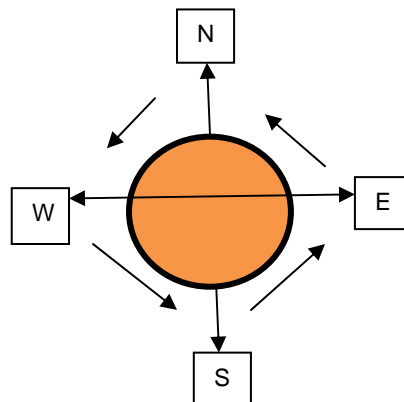
Heaven models itself after Dao.

And Tao models itself after Nature (*Daodejing*, verse 16)

In particular, Daoism is most concerned about human relationships with the landscape, nature and the non-human environment. In many ways it has laid out the foundation of Chinese living spaces and cities.

It seems, in ancient urban sites, according to Steinhardt (1990:19) especially of the imperial cities located at the primary sites in Xian, Beijing, Luoyang, Nanjing, and Kaifeng, and the secondary sites in Hangzhou, Datong Chengdu and Ye, that cosmological alignments were of primary importance. These cities were usually divided into four quarters plus the center which holds an open space – the empty center underlined by the Daoist principle of ‘*hsu*’. The four quarters conform to four things – an animal, color, elements and season and they represent the Daoist cardinal principles which mark spiritual or seasonal qualities. The Southern orientation was considered the primary and the cardinal direction the Emperor faced when seated in the Hall to receive his ministerial audience. (Nowadays, we would consider this as also ecologically the best direction to face, avoiding the strong summer heat and the severe winter cold.) The animal represented is the phoenix, with the color as vermilion, the element as fire and

the season , Summer and its spiritual value of life. Going from left to right, the next cardinal point represented the East quadrant symbolized by the dragon, the color blue, the element, wood, and marked the season, Spring and its spiritual value of renewal. The next quadrant is the North, representing the tortoise, black, water and season, Winter, with its spiritual value of agedness and decay. The last quadrant is the West marked by the tiger, white, the season Autumn, and its spiritual value of death. Autumn and white have been traditionally associated with death in Chinese culture. As the imperial hall was sited to face south, the north or west was the site of towns , the quadrants of decay and death. The Imperial Hall was also called Taiji, the Polar Star which is also the Daoist astronomical symbol of Heaven. Every city sector had these four cardinal directions and symbolisms':



In relation to the siting of ancient and traditional urban areas attention was said to relate the human environment to the natural landscape to ensure the balance of harmonious interrelation with nature in order to ensure auspicious human existence (Steinhardt:1990:32). The urban site had the mountains protecting the North and its

source of water. The site was usually near water, either river or lake with easy access to fresh water. The natural phenomena of mountains, wind and water had to be harmoniously interrelated to the spatial and human forms. Such balancing of sites and natural forces have now come to be known as 'fengshui' (wind and water literally) or Chinese geomancy and 'Chinese sites and their architectural components have endured for millennia' (Steinhardt: 1990: 13). These siting principles can be seen as the effects of the Daoist worldview of the co-existence of human and natural forces. The Daoist notion of yin and yang often expressed as the symbol:



The Daoist yin-yang symbol signifying the complementarity of opposites

Dao relates to this view of balancing forces and expresses the notion of syncretizing opposites as parts of a complementary pair rather than the dualism of confronting binaries. At the same time, the cartography of cardinal directions, I believe, can be seen as reflected in the urban layouts of the square grid of ancient and traditional Chinese cities with its cardinal directions starting from South to West in a circular fashion.

Despite the geometry of the square grid which represents the earth (the ancient Chinese believed the Earth was square like a checkerboard), the Daoist propensity for the circle, the sphere and the spiral relates to the notion of re-turning energy which comes from 'nothingness' or 'the Mother of myriad things or chaos to its source. In the *Tao of Physic*, Capra (1984) posits the new logic of physics as the Chaos Theory. Such a theory relates the pattern of randomness and the rationality of reversion to chaos as the natural state of material things. In Daoism this tendency is expressed as the natural way of absorbing chaos rather than attempting to erase it through the logic of order. Chaos has its own logic of energy which cannot be opposed or confronted with strict order. As an effect of this we can think of a general example of what is considered as the urban chaos of slums or ghettos which no sooner than cleared and erased to conform to the neatness of order, returns shortly, sometimes with a vengeance.

If chaos is the natural logic through which things re(-)turn to its source (Mother of myriad things), then change or transformative energy is the perpetual process of nature (which includes the human, the non-human and the landscape). Through the process of this transformative power, chaos or random pattern and the rationality of fractal (non-Euclidean) geometry, spatial energy can also be avowed.

Yet, since the Western contact with China in the 17th Century, Daoist siting concepts are known primarily for the importance of its landscaped garden aesthetics or for the 'fengshui' (appropriate orientation) of its individual architecture or buildings and not urbanscaping. The Dao is often associated with nature and gardens in relation to

architectural design. In the past 300 years of western discourse and the past 100 years about the urban, Daoist poetics (a combination of philosophy, politics and aesthetics) have not been discussed at all in relation to understanding, interpreting and investigating the city and urbanity and the modes of urban socio-politico-spatial operations, in particular, the way spaces create events and how events create spaces. In other words, how such urban sites perform themselves (to use Amin and Thrift's (2009) notion of urban performativity.)

Adaptability and Flexibility of the spatial and volumetric organization of the built urban environment:

The best is like water,

Water is good; it benefits all things and

Does not compete with them.

It dwells in (lowly) places that all disdain.

That is why it is so near to Dao (*Laozi*: 8)

According to Wing-Tsit Chan (1963), the emphasis on water as one of the most important symbols of the Daodejing is ethical rather than metaphysical. We could say that Daoist ethics disavow the monumental, stressing, instead, the low and horizontal forms although its poetics can encompass opposites of low and high as a kind of formal complementarity . Extrapolating from this we could also say that the water symbolism can be used as an allegory to cultivate the awareness that human

monuments, seen not just from the human perspective, can never last. In effect, in terms of urbanity, the lowly is as important, if not more important, than the monumental. Thus in terms of volumetric scales, diversity in the urban is important and flexibility in architectural designs which promote adaptation (as water does within its environmental contexts).and multiple uses through space and time. The Daoist propensity for syncretizing binary opposites can also be drawn on in connection to this so that high and low, old and new forms, masculine and feminine spatial practices can be accommodated in the socio-spatial operations of the urban. This diversity of scales means the micro is woven into macro and generates a geometry of numbers and quantity with additive and subtractive formal flow rather than a fixed and static urban layout. Daoist emphasis on diversity also means that the historical layering of urban rather than fixed proportionality in urban design or layout logic.



Water: Chinese ink brush calligraphy by the author

Diversity of the lived and living social environment

Tao produced the One

The One produced the two.

The two produced the three.

And the three produced the ten thousand things.

The ten thousand things carry the yin and embrace the yang, and through the blending of material force (chi) they achieve harmony.

All things depend on it for life, and it does not turn away from them.

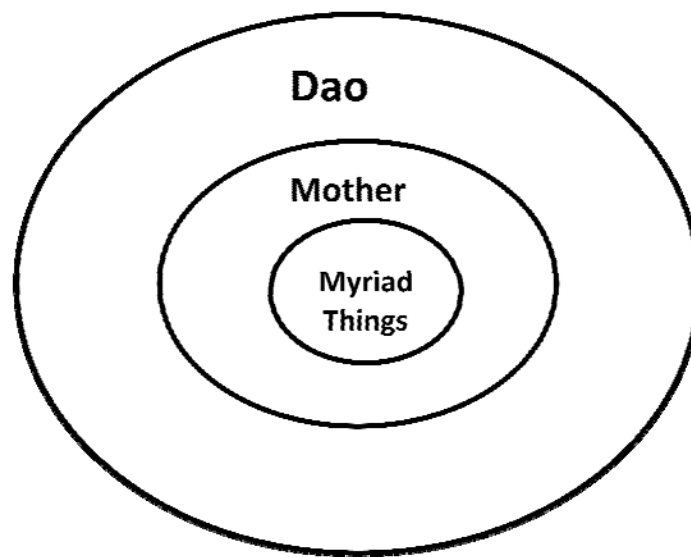
It accomplishes its task, but does not claim credit for it. It clothes and feeds all things but does not claim to be master over them. (*Daodejing*, Verse 42)

Daoist poetics disavow the Enlightenment European 'bias' which defined a fixed position of the human subject with an assumed split or dualist distance between humans and nature, mind and body, subject and object – a Cartesian philosophical moment positioning the vision of the human subject felt decades and centuries later.



Mother of Myriad Things: Chinese ink brush calligraphy by the author

The Cartesian perspective entails fixed points and regulated lines drawn from these points to construct the Renaissance perspective whose viewing position is anchored and there is no doubt or uncertainty in art and architectural drawings are which are 'truthful' but not lively (zhen er bu miao). On the other hand, Daoist aesthetics call for a moving eye which identifies with the object of the gaze rather than the realistic distancing of the object. The energy of 'flow' of spontaneity is ever present in creative and artistic endeavors that effect a 'lively', dynamic approach in representation and design. This can relate to urban and architectural practices in terms the socio-spatial operations of the people who inhabit urban spaces.



Dao embraces the source and diversity

Moreover, the Daoist gaze is not fixed or humanized and can relate to human and non-human objects within the urban context. Vitality, liveliness and aura (qiyun and shen yi) are of supreme importance in the Daoist context. Carried over to the socio-spatial practices of urban life, Daoism adopts the roving perspective of the urban dweller. In

this sense, the lived experience of 'lowly' persons moving around urban streets or inhabit urban spaces are as important as the planners and designers or urban authorities in determining the quality of life in the urban.

Multi-perspectival and immersive urbanity

The Great Tao flows everywhere.

It may go left or right.

All things depend on it for life, and it does not turn away from them.

It accomplishes its task, but does not claim credit for it. It clothes and feeds all things but does not claim to be master over them. (*Daodejing*, Verse 34)

Since Daoism sees human relationships as only part of the cosmic organization which includes all animate and inanimate relationships, the human perspective is not privileged in Daoism although it can be encompassed in its worldview. The seeing subject enters and experiences the world. It communicates with the world in an on-going and evolving interaction. 'Seeing is an experience of a journey. It discloses no centric or final truth, but a scroll of endless viewpoints. With the mind-heart of forests and springs' the Cartesian subject, with its dualistic distinction and confrontation with the world, is dissolved. An *inter-subjective* approach is proposed. It postulates a negation of the centric subject through immersion and dispersion. The subject immerses itself in a space of dispersion, with an extending net of relations with 'others', that is, with nature and other human subjects. We find this in the teachings of metaphysical negation where the centric being is eroded in the universal process of change and transformation in Daoism (and also Buddhism). We find this in the teachings on

harmony between humans and nature, between humans and heaven in Daoism in its yin-yang complementariness. (and also Confucianism). With the Daoist emphasis on change and transformation together with the harmony of complementary opposites, we arrive at a strongly reinforced multi-perspectival and immersive urbanity. (Zhu, 2002: 242).

A Cartesian perspectivalism that has been deconstructed in the last 20 years or so by Western scholars, such as Derrida, Bourdieu and others, presumes a centric, autonomous and rational subject, distanced from and also seeing and controlling the world of objects. A different subjectivity is found in traditional Chinese painting and urban space: a mind's eye floats in and above spaces, immersing itself in the world, moving from space to space, from one view to the next, forever decentring the Cartesian perspective and the position of the rational subject. (Zhu, 2002: 12)

Daoist poetics is concerned more with the vital flow of energy rather than the static position of a subject or object, absorbing rather than dichotomizing contrasts between subject and object. It both disavows the Platonic solid and the Cartesian framing of a dualist split between viewer and world or landscape of objects, the split between subject and object. The Daoist gaze is not that of the rational subject studying and seeing and controlling the world of material object mapped in a pure, mathematical, universal and boundless space i.e Cartesian perspectivalism.



Fan: Chinese ink brush calligraphy by the author

Return to the origin or source (*Fan/Fu*) in conjunction with Transformation (*Yi*).

Daoism posits change as in some ways cyclical and there is always a return to the source.

Turn back and return to one's Way

(*Yijing (Book of Changes)*: 24: Fu Hexagram:107).

The *Daodejing* also uses *Fu* as well as *Fan* to mean 'return' or 'reverse':

Attaining to the utmost space; keeping firmly to stillness. The

Myriad things all emerge together. I watch their return (*Fu*).

Things teem and each returns back to its root. (*Laozi* 16 /*MWD* 60)

Zhang in his *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy* (2002: 119 -20) says:

For the *Laozi* (*Daodejing*) the pattern of return is inherent in the Way itself and manifested in all things. Adding to and taking away from are opposites just as fortune and misfortune are, but one cannot exist without the other....In talking about the emergence of the Way from the cosmic soup the *Laozi* has this to say

If pressed I shall call it the 'ultimate'. What is ultimate is called

'receding'; what recedes is called 'distant'; what is distant is called 'turning

back [*fan*]'. (*Laozi*: 25 /*MWD*: 69).

In the course of their development things turn back. Having turned back, they then return again to their previous state. In terms of Hegelian logic these steps may be described as the negation of an affirmation followed by the negation of a negation. There can be two kinds of negation of a negation. According to the first, the situation returns to exactly what it was at the beginning. Movement is

circular. According to the second, the situation is not precisely the same, for it carries the seed of a new development..(Zhang, 2002:120)

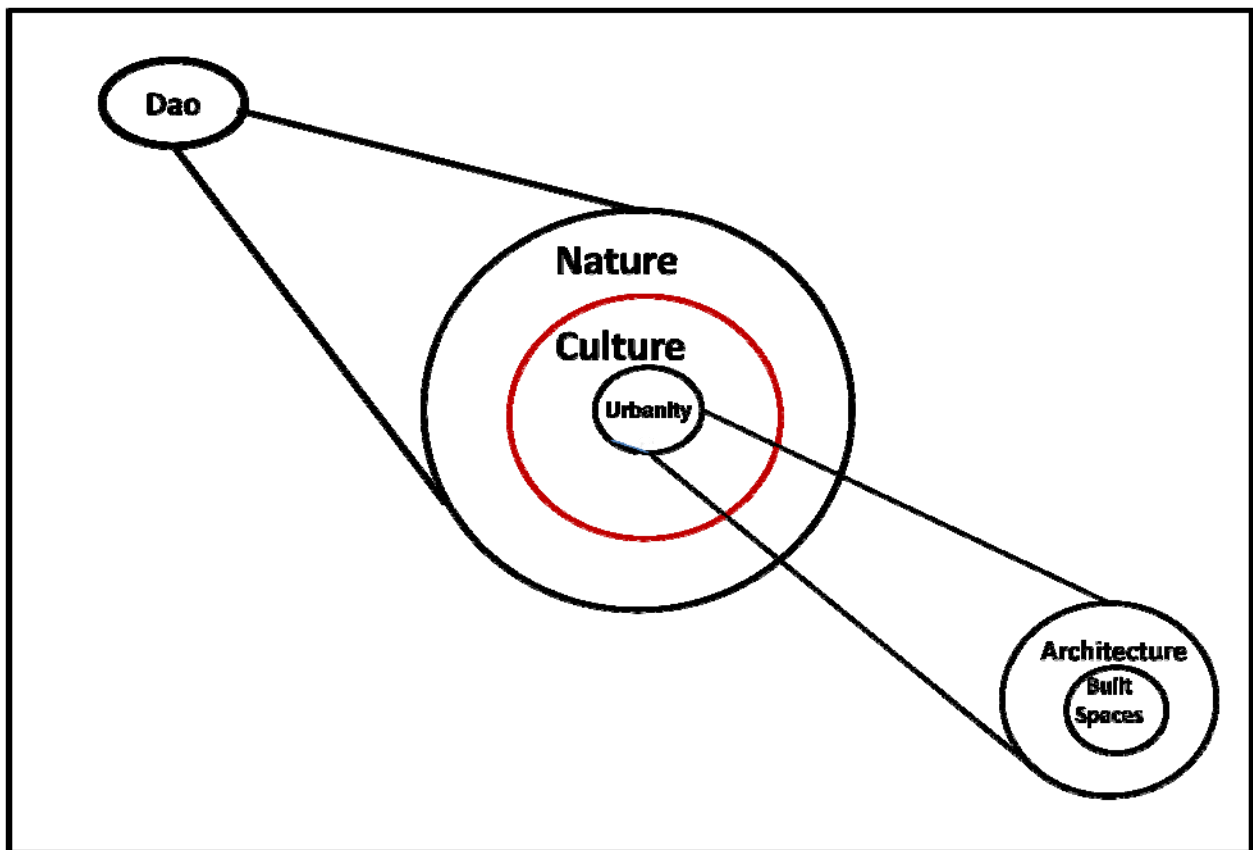


Fu: Chinese ink brush calligraphy by the author

Thus one can cull this concept of *return* to use as a strategy to create *Yi* (change/transformation) hand-in-hand with *Fan* or *Fu* (return to the original source). In complementing *Yi* with *Fan* or *Fu* we create a *Re-turn* which is not a wholesale returning

to the original state (a strategy which historic preservation tends to adopt) but a design or developmental change without erasing the root/seed (origin) in order to attain *De* (Power/Force) to enable the natural blossoming of its potential power.

These five Daoist concepts and strategies will be used to explore the four case study sites that follow in Chapters 3 and 4.



Architecture and Urbanity through Daoist lens

Chapter 4

Analysis of Two Sites: The Dao of Urban Parks

To understand urbanity it is helpful to investigate small sites to get at the level of the ground and street experience rather than the omniscient view of the planning authorities and see how they operate and relate to the larger urban socio-spatial organization. Specifically, investigating such sites will enable us to understand the city's performance of itself through its everyday life operations. In this Chapter, two small sites, one in Shanghai, China and one in New York City will be explored to understand urbanity in order to cast some light on whether the principles drawn from Daoism can either be applied or are already evident.

The two sites I investigated are the People's Park located within People's Square in Huangpu district neighborhood in Shanghai and Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village neighborhood in New York City. Both sites contain paved and green park spaces. I conducted the auto-ethnographic study of these parks by participating in and generally doing what most of the locals do in the parks for leisure activities. I visited the parks during three visits, each of a week's duration during the three semester periods from January 2010 to June 2011 in Shanghai and New York City. I have sat for hours at these parks, watched people and their activities and even dined at the parks' restaurants or dining cafes nearby.

Urban Parks and Squares

Parks as sites reveal scenes of encounters and function as places manifesting the practice of democracy, constituting 'breathing spaces', and pooling people for democratic action. The City is not just a place of consumption, but a place of production or performance of democratic politics in parks and other urban public spaces where a large diversity of people congregate. Urban spaces also function as protected spaces for vulnerable groups (elderly, children, etc) and spaces for socialization into and of democracy in democratic countries (Amin and Thrift, 2009:13,.153 -155).

The diversity of park users constitutes a Daoist immersive multi-perspectivalism usually resonant of such strategies of diverse perspectives evident in the design of urban open spaces. In other words, this Daoist strategy can be discerned in the spatial organization of the parks. The open access and diversity of usage is encouraged by there being lack of physical or political barrier to any who can use the parks and by being safe because of frequent usage by a great number of people at all times of the day when the parks are open for use.

In urban architecture, a city square or urban square is a planned open area in a city, usually or originally rectangular in shape. Some city squares are large enough that they act as a sort of "National Square". Squares can either be parks or plazas.

The first urban formations started appearing at least 6000 years ago. Within urban areas open public spaces always existed and they served a very important purpose. Along with the development of human society and the development of cities, the squares acquired more and more functions. At first, the squares were established at the

crossroads of important trade routes where exchange of goods as well as ideas took place. For example, Phoenician traders—people invented numerical and linguistic pictographic inscriptions out of the need to record transactions. Another very important function of the public square was that it served as an opportunity to exercise the power of rulers with military processions and parades.

In recent times, theaters, restaurants and museums are also finding their place on the squares. Cities, themselves, are actually becoming museums, a collection of human experiences that preserve numerous cultural values and their architecture has been showcased for cultural consumption.. in my walks in these Shanghai and New York, I have had this very impression.

In the United States, a town square typically consists of a park or plaza in front of the original court house or town hall. In some cities, especially in New England in the U.S., the term "square" (as its Spanish equivalent *Plaza*) is applied to a commercial area (e.g., Central Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts), usually formed around the intersection of three or more streets, and which originally consisted of some open area (many of which have been filled in with traffic islands and other traffic calming features).

In Mainland China, “People’s Square” is a common designation for the central town square of modern Chinese cities, established as part of urban modernization within the last few decades. In dynastic times, formal squares mainly existed within palace grounds and were forbidden to commoners. These squares are the site of government buildings, museums and other public buildings. The probably best-known and largest such square in China is the Shanghai People’s Square.

An urban park, also known as a municipal park (North America) or a public park or open space (United Kingdom), is a park in cities and other incorporated places to offer recreation and green space to local residents of and visitors of the municipality. The design, operation and maintenance are usually done by government, typically on the local level, but may occasionally be contracted out to a private sector company.

Common features of municipal parks include playgrounds, hiking, running and fitness trails or paths, sports field and courts, public restrooms, boat ramps and/or picnic facilities, depending on the budget and natural features available. The two city parks I visited have a number of such facilities.

In *The Politics of Park Design: A History of Urban Parks in America*, (1982), Galen Cranz identifies four phases of park design in the U.S. In the late 19th century, large tracts of land on the outskirts of cities were purchased by city governments to create "pleasure grounds": semi-open, charmingly landscaped areas whose primary purpose was to allow city residents, especially the workers, to relax in nature. As time passed and the urban area grew around the parks, land in these parks was used for other purposes, such as zoos, golf courses and museums and now are considered regional parks because they require a higher level of management than smaller local parks.

In the early 1900s, according to Cranz, U.S. cities built neighborhood parks with swimming pools, playgrounds and civic buildings, with the intention of acculturating the immigrant residents. In the 1950s, when money became available after the World War II, new parks continued to focus on both outdoor and indoor recreation with services, such as sports leagues using their ball fields and gymnasias. These smaller parks were

built in residential neighborhoods, and tried to serve all residents with programs for seniors, adults, teens and children. Green space was of secondary importance. As urban land prices climbed, new urban parks in the 1960s and after have been mainly pocket parks. These small parks provide greenery, a place to sit outdoors, and often a playground for children. All four types of park continue to exist in urban areas.

Chinese public urban spaces

The square, in European and American cities, is the property of the city and public spaces come under the authority of only the government. In traditional Chinese cities, up to a century ago, such a space was usually attached to a building, government or religious – like a courtyard.

Unlike the square or city plaza in traditional European cities, no formal public urban spaces existed in China until the last century. Usually, a temple courtyard or street and mostly nodal spaces where two busy streets conjoin to form a space for public social activities function as urban public spaces. There were no agora-like or plaza-like spaces in traditional China. Most activities happen on streets and by a natural process spills out onto any spaces between streets.

According to Wang (2003) 'street culture signifies the full range of cultural artifacts and activities that appeared on the street, from shop decorations and signs, folk performances and celebrations to ways of earning a living. It also includes the physical structures that lined the streets, such as stores, teahouses, and other public places that opened out onto the streets and claimed street sidewalks. Street culture was an

important part of popular culture, and street life was central to the daily lives of city dwellers, especially those in the lower classes. Life in urban public spaces – the site of the most visible cultural space – was radically transformed in the early twentieth century, a transformation that resulted in the reconstruction of urban public space, re-creation of people's public roles, and redefinition of the relationship among ordinary people, local elites, and the state.

Urban residents, especially the poor, used the street as their shared space for everyday commercial, recreational, and ceremonial events. With the onset of social change, reformers, who had been influenced by Western culture and sought to regulate the use of public space and commons, had to struggle to maintain their claim to the street. (Wang, 2003: 2 - 3).

Chinese people, according to Hu Jie, a Beijing, landscape architect for the Beijing Olympic Forest Park, have a special regard for urban public spaces. They love to 'hang out', socialize or exercise in public parks. For instance, at Ho Hai - a famous tourist spot around the lake and a green area, Chinese women practice aerobic dance until late at night. During the day, many people bring reclining chairs and tea pots are ubiquitous.

For Hu Jie, public parks are evidence of social transformation. In the old days, such formal public open spaces hardly existed. Gardens belonged to elites, feudal lords or the royal dynasty. Ordinary people who wanted to get in touch with nature needed to travel to the countryside or go to temple courtyards.. Public parks such as Central Park in New York and Park Slope in Brooklyn became a trend to emulate for urban planning later. Hu thinks that public parks do not have to be beautiful or extravagant; but should

allow easy to access for the public. The most beautiful park to him is Beihei Park in Beijing and the city that seriously lacks public parks is Shanghai.

In the traditional Chinese urban setting, apart from streets and alleys, the courtyards have been the only form of urban open public spaces. (Pang Wai Ki: 2006). The courtyards of temples, be they Buddhist, Daoist, Confucian or others, have retained a public nature, since these temples are principally open to and invite all sections of the society to participate in their ritual or other activities. The Xuanmiao Taoist Temple at the centre of the Suzhou old city has served as 'the loci of urban activities'.

Xu (2000: 180-199) argues that the communal spaces by the Xuanmiao Daoist Temple were not intended to constitute a kind of Chinese versions of the civic square in He argues that communal spaces in the traditional Chinese sense such spaces usually were attached to certain kinds of social institutions, such as temples and guild houses. The Xuanmiao Daoist Temple in the Suzhou old city, the Chenghuang Temple in Shanghai, and the Confucian Temple in Nanjing, attracting people from different walks of life have become the central commercial entertainment district where locals and visitors would make them destinations for various purposes.

Thus while in America and Europe, formal parks and city squares have a continued tradition of centrality to urban planning and urbanity, in China such spaces emerged less than a century ago and have only very recently become a central foci of urban planning. The use of such spaces for socialized activities is a modern manifestation. Traditionally, nodal spaces such as where streets conjoin or the courtyards of religious

buildings, as well as streets, were and continue to be urban public spaces for social interaction.

In order to understand public urban spaces we need to frame them within the wider contexts of their cities. To see the connection between the city and its urban spaces we need to look at their respective cities first to understand the socio-cultural conditions under which they operate.

Shanghai:



Shanghai's location in the People's Republic of China



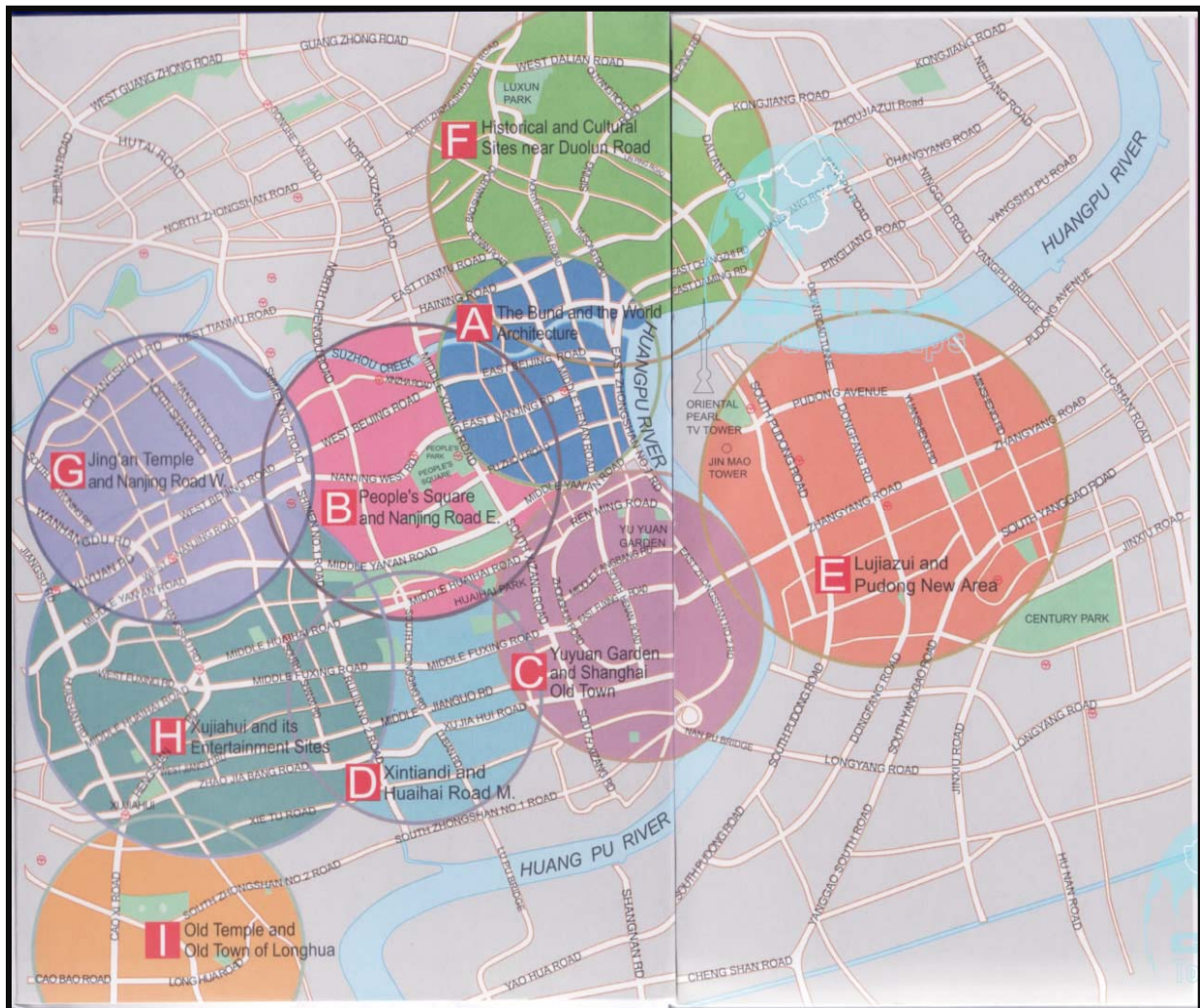
Shanghai in the vicinity of neighboring Korea



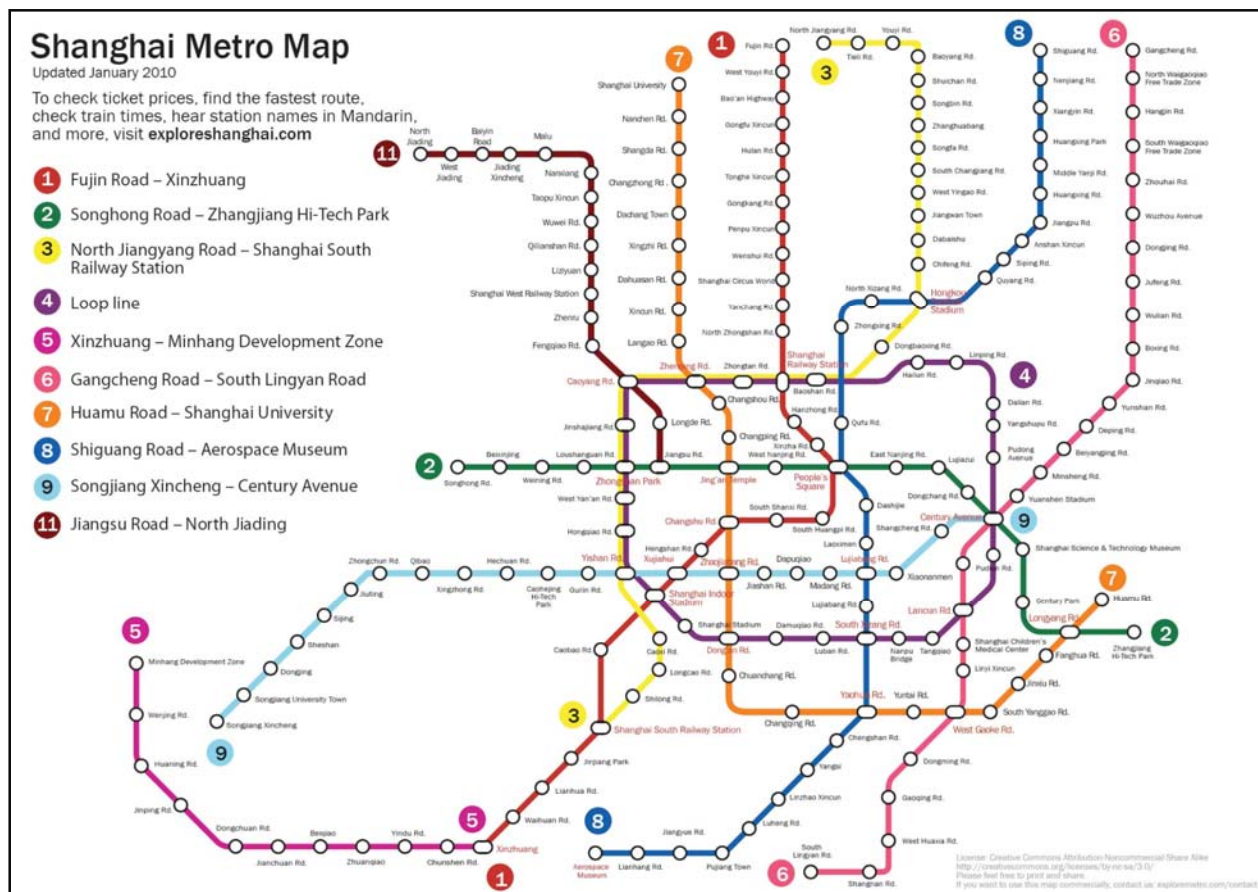
Shanghai District Map, 2011 with the five inner city neighborhoods



Shanghai : Major road connections



Shanghai areas of interest



Shanghai Metro Map

During the past 20 years, urban Shanghai has expanded faster than any other world city. It is now a global city with population of almost 19 million, a six-fold increase in the last two decades. A vast influx of economic migrants has increased its need for housing and development. Skyscrapers dominate its landscape as never before, symbolic of both its economic growth and its rapid modernization. Modern public transportation has been rapidly spreading throughout the city as more and more subways are built (see

map above). It is a city in flux where the towers, globally understood symbols of the city's ambitions, coexist with the built forms of the city's colonial past. Vast scale developments transform entire sections of the city into new business districts. At the street level, the Shanghainese understand that their city is changing rapidly and many express unease about the disorientating pace of restructuring and the surreal spatial juxtapositions that it produces (see Cody, Wang, and *Endless City*).

In contrast to the apparent cohesion of the Mao years, the recent social and spatial transformation of Shanghai has resulted in a more diverse urban society where inequalities are deep and present the possibility for conflict and the crisis of urbanity. Expatriates from the Asia Pacific region and the West, highly educated overseas Chinese and a rapidly emerging immigrant population engaged in some niches of the city's service economy, all contribute to an increasingly complex social landscape of disparity with widely unequal distribution of spatial occupancy rights. Chinese internal migrants from rural areas, a "floating population" of more than 5 million with limited rights and vulnerable livelihoods have problems of poverty, affordable shelters and low educational levels. The social fabric of Shanghai has also been rent with disaffected immigrant population and criminal activities.

The city has an official local public policy to promote a goal of harmony which is difficult, considering the central Chinese government's policy of directing the city to continue absorbing rural migrants and turning them into urban citizens. Shanghai has a urban population density of 24,673 people per square kilometer in 2009, according to government census sources..The urban Chinese have traditionally shared responsibility

for security in public spaces with the support of both government institutions and local communities coupled with the experience of decades of a tightly controlled social order. However, these official objectives of harmony and rapid growth may mean that there has to be greater efforts in providing conditions and perceptions of "security" involving a wide range of the city's residents in a greater understanding of the nature of urban public spaces and of how these spaces can work for urbanity or quality of living within the city in the midst of profound changes that contribute to a crisis of urbanity. Such quality of city life include the democratic access to the use of public open spaces.

The Two Urban Public Open Spaces: People's Park and Washington Square Park:

What functions, then, do urban public spaces such as parks and squares serve in everyday urban life? What is the relationship between urban dwellers and public space? Who are the major occupants of urban public space, and how is it used by ordinary residents? What role do neighborhoods and community play in public life? To what extent does state and local elites control the street and community? And how did popular culture and local politics interact?

What kind of experience, then, can the inhabitant (dweller, visitor, walker) have and expect in different urban places? To quote Amin and Thrift (p. 137), 'what is meant by place as *living* rather than *lived* space'? He points to four characteristic modes of understanding *living* space:

1. These modes are 'dynamic'.

2. They attempt to produce this dynamic by understanding the city as 'a gradual unfolding of spaces and times, working at different speeds in different measures. Buildings are seen as mobile and as in movement'.
3. They rest on a particular understanding of architecture, somewhat in line with Benjamin's notions of architecture as 'tactile appropriation' which are 'a kind of questioning of material by pushing it to the point where it encounters paradox, and begins to follow a contrary logic'.
4. They are engaged 'with trying to re-define be-longing'.

In short these modes offer an 'expansion of potential' – 'a widening of ways that space might be inhabited in...cities.' (Amin and Thrift, 2003: 137). These modes share the logic of Daoist understanding of spaces. The following can be considered as functions of open public urban spaces:

- Social and community connections and diverse encounters
- Relief from overcrowded dense city spaces of dwelling – breathing spaces
- Leisure and meditative activities.

Daoist concepts and strategies seek to promote these functions and ensure vital flow and gatherings. These concepts and strategies could therefore become criteria for such spatial designs and organizations.

These Daoist concepts and strategies do not directly equalize or democratize usage of such spaces but they can be enabling for such spaces to provide open access and participation and in this way indirectly promote democratizing spaces.

Urban subjects may experience the kinetic, sensual, visual, auditory, tactile, taste and smell, while performing the following activities:

- strolling, walking and jogging
- sitting
- contemplating
- observing
- meeting and talking
- eating
- people watching

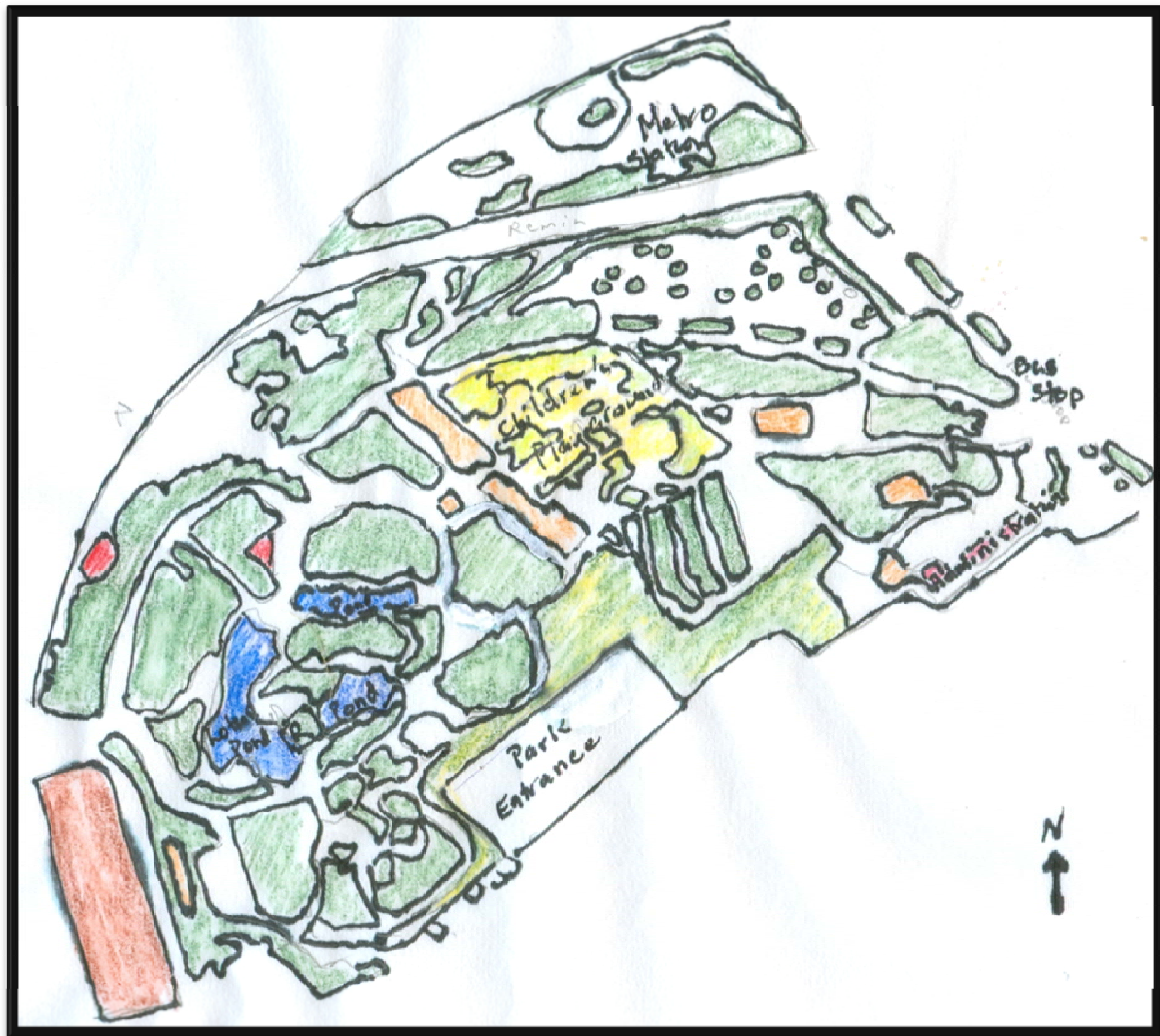
There is also an expectation for safety and security, privacy or conviviality. The two parks discussed show human subjects engaged in the above activities.

Shanghai People's Park in People's Square:



People's Park and environs





Shanghai People's Park: Various tree groves and spaces : Chinese Ink and Watercolor by the author



People's Square with Remin Avenue on right.
www.theodora.com/.../china/china_photos_40.html



People's Square with skyscrapers in the background.
<http://members.virtualtourist.com/m/p/m/392cb4/>

The whole square consists of an area of 130,700 sq meters and was formerly the Shanghai racecourse. Now it is a political, government and cultural center in downtown Shanghai area. Although Shanghai has no clearly defined focal point, the People's Square (Renmin Guangchang), also called Remin Square serves as an acknowledged geographic and cultural hub and center of the city, especially as metro lines 1,2,and 8 intersect here at the city's busiest junction. People's Square has been many things in its time. The park was originally the Shanghai Racecourse, the social heart of British Shanghai. Increasingly fringed by striking Art Deco architecture during the 1920s and 1930s, it was a holding camp for detainees during World War II. The park was divided into two by the broad thoroughfare of Renmin (People's) Avenue in the 1950s and it is still divided by the avenue. However, it was not until the 1990sthat People's Square formally became the administrative and cultural centre of Shanghai, with monumental architecture to match.

Much less austere and regimented than Beijing's crypt-Stalinist Tiananmen Square, Shanghai Square is free of the rigid geometry and paranoia of the capital's more notorious rectangle, but crowds can be intense. By avoiding symmetry, People's Square is also far more relaxed than Tiananmen Square. Shanghai's essential shapelessness finds expression in the square's lack of clear equilibrium, while Tiananmen Square in many ways echoes the shape of Forbidden City and the concentric ring-roads that radiate from it. Other marked differences are that People's Square is overlooked by stratospheric skyscrapers (Tiananmen Square is not) and it has emerged as a snazzy platform for culture, entertainment and the arts in Shanghai. People's Square is also a fun place to relax and watch people strolling, flying kites and

even waltzing in front of the musical fountain. Beneath the square lurk a huge subterranean shopping plaza and a warren of corridors linking the numerous entrances of the metro station.

Today, People's Square is dominated by four set-piece buildings. To the northeast end of the square is the Shanghai Urban Planning Hall. Built in 1996, Shanghai City Hall and the Shanghai Museum face each other across the broad swathe of Renmin Avenue. On the other side of City Hall is the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Hall, built in 2000. Sandwiched between the two is the austere Shanghai Government Building, while in the south of the square is the distinctive form of the Shanghai Museum. Their architecture fits their respective roles – City Hall is a severe structure in the best Communist tradition, while the Shanghai Museum, shaped like an ancient Chinese bronze vessel, is a homage to Chinese tradition. Anchoring the west of the square and flanking City Hall is the Shanghai Grand Theatre built in 1998 and designed by the French Arte Charpentier & Associates,. . With three theatres seating 1,800 people and a distinctive sweeping roof, the Grand Theatre is the centre of Shanghai's Shanghai's premier venue for the performing arts with a program of classical music and ballet.

Overlooking all this is the rocket-like tower of Tomorrow Square (built in 2003), housing the JW Marriott Hotel. This is one of Shanghai's iconic edifices clearly visible by day or by night. In addition to the four structures described above, People's Square is surrounded by a range of iconic buildings, layering Shanghai's cosmopolitan past with its present. The Shanghai Art Museum with its 1930s facade, on the northwest corner

of the Park which used to be the race-course club house, and was used as the Shanghai Library from 1949 to 1998, was re-opened as an art museum in 2000. The museum is topped by a trendy rooftop restaurant, Kathleen's 5.

The large paved People's Square is not popular to local residents and the voluminous space of the square is largely used as a transitional place by tourists going from one iconic building to another. While I was there I also used the square mainly to go to the various buildings and the Square presented a sharp contrast to the People's Park which was very popular with locals from my observation and also noted by travel guides as a local communal park. The spatial organization of People's Park enabled a range of social activities that made the park so well used. There were many niches of a diversity of spaces for strolling, playing table games on fixed concrete seats and tables, small clearing surrounded by trees for people who used these for practicing tai chi and martial arts, dance and general social interactions. Thus the park is a multi-functional complex of spaces that enabled diverse immersive multi-perspectivalism and open flexible usage. The site's location in a busy vicinity of Nanjing West Road and in a very dense part of Shanghai in the overcrowded Huangpu neighborhood means that it can draw on many people to use the park. However, the Daoist strategies evident in the park's design to enable flexible, adaptive and diverse usage contributed to its being a high quality urban space that helped to alleviate the overcrowded conditions and visual monotony of Nanjing West Road and its environs. The following table shows a sample of the facilities available to the visitors of the People's Park site:

Sights	Shopping	Eating	Drinking	Entertainment	Lodging
Shanghai Museum	Museum store	Yang's Fry Dumplings	Babarossa	Yifu Theater	J W Marriott Tomorrow Square
Urban Planning Exhibition Hall	Shanghai No. 1 Food Store	Xiao Nian Guo	Nanjing Lu Bar	Shanghai Grand Theatre	Shanghai Holiday Hotel
MOCCA Shanghai		Nina's Sichuan House	Kathleen's	Ming Town E-Tour Youth Hostel	

Although its skyline is dominated by new generation five-star hotels, within the vicinity of the square and the park, there are a number of cheap hostels, usually catering to out-of-town Chinese tourists, such as Hao Jiang Motel, Home Inn, Shanghai Railway Hotel and many more. In short, lodgings are provided for people with a great diversity of financial capabilities.

People's Park in the quadrant of the People's Square nearest to Nanjing Road, is the site of my auto-ethnographic study. Users of the park, judging by their looks and clothes appear to be from a range of social classes from the wealthy and well dressed to folks in overalls. It is a green refuge from Shanghai's fume-ridden roads, with its Shanghai Museum of Contemporary Art, and pond-side bar, Barbarossa, all overlooked by Tomorrow Square, the Shanghai Art Museum and the Park Hotel. During my three visits to Shanghai in the three semesters from January 2010 to June 2011, I have sat and walked for hours in the park and even dined at the park restaurant, Barbarossa which served a fusion of different Asian cuisines.

Throngs of mostly local photographers surround the park pond with its flowering pink lotuses, armed with a wide range of cameras from the very sophisticated to simple.

During the weekend mornings I saw a great number and diverse types of people in a makeshift tent at the entrance of the park where an unofficial matchmaking market is held here. These people were parents who show up with their children's bio-data, but without the adult children, in an attempt to find suitably successful spouses for their children. Sheets of paper with their children's bio-data were stuck to the inside walls of the tent and even on the shrubs and plants in the park. (See picture below.)

The Park is well-served by underground connections – nos. 1, 2 and 8 subway lines - and other forms of public transport such as buses and trams which have their stations within walking distance of the park on both the north and south sides as well as the Renmin Avenue which cuts through the square. Moreover, the biggest underground car garage and shopping mall lie beneath square.

West Nanjing Road (comparable to New York City's Fifth Avenue) is located nearby at its North side with the Pacific Hotel (popular with the young set for its lounge and bar facilities) in its vicinity. It is one of the longest commercial and retail corridors in the city (See Pu:2002) it is usually overcrowded. When I was there for at least five times during my various visits in different seasons, there were always shoulder to shoulder crowds at different times of the day and night. The People's Park serves as a destination to unblock the flow of people here.

Thus the Shanghai's People's Park serves a great diversity of uses and users encouraged by the park's flexible spatial organization, its strong facility of providing connection of humans to nature and immersive multi-perspectivalism of the park's designers. The park's multi-functional and dynamic spatial flow of users and activities serves to alleviate the crisis of urbanity in the core of Shanghai city with its traffic jams and fumes, congested walkways and noisy urbanscape. It provides the city dwellers with a space that is tranquil, shady and suited to both communal and individual leisure pursuits. It is one of a few high quality urban open spaces in Shanghai.

Thus we can say that People's Park has a great variety and diversity of social activities and provisions for socio-spatial operations. Its environment has a rich layering of the old and the new and provides for the lower-income group as well as more up-market elites and tourists. Quality parks, like the People's Park that are also open and accessible to all, make cities more livable and go a great way to alleviate the crisis of overcrowded urbanity.

The following photographs were taken during my walks in the Shanghai People's Park and they show the great diversity of spaces and park users as well as the flexibility and multi-perspectival views of the park's design and function:

Shanghai People's Park



Bus Stop by the Park



In front of the Park entrance



Park stop Metro Station entrance



Food Vendor by the Metro entrance



High rise buildings overlooking the Park



People's Park entrance sign



"Marriage market" just behind Park entrance



A wide patterned concrete walkway



Seating benches by the walkway



Stones by a grove of bamboo trees



Looking towards the park entrance through a grove



A space with colorful plants



The contemporary art museum inside the Park



Another path way line with tree groves



People strolling by a bed of flowering plants



Photographers by the lotus pond



Another photograph shoot at the lotus pond



People resting at the pavilion by the lotus ponds



Looking across another lotus pond at a distant grove



Two men fishing in the lotus pond



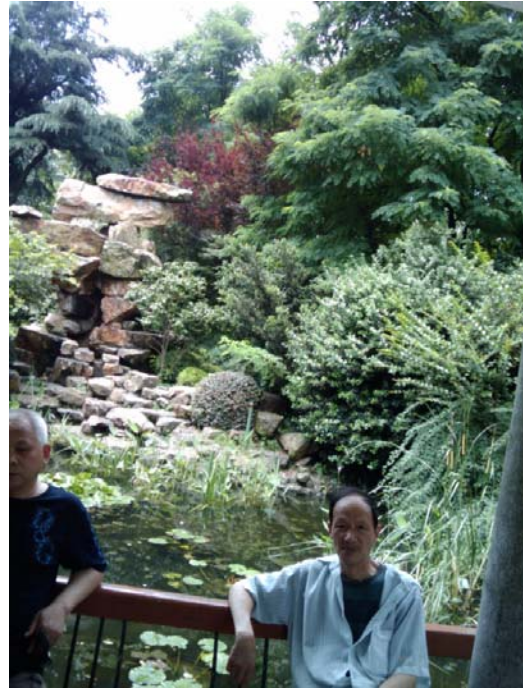
Entrance to the Park restaurant, Barbarossa



Inside the Barbarossa before lunch time



Wood slat paved pathway in a grove



On a veranda by the main lotus pond

New York City's Washington Square



Location of New York City on mainland United States



Map of Manhattan Neighborhoods in New York City

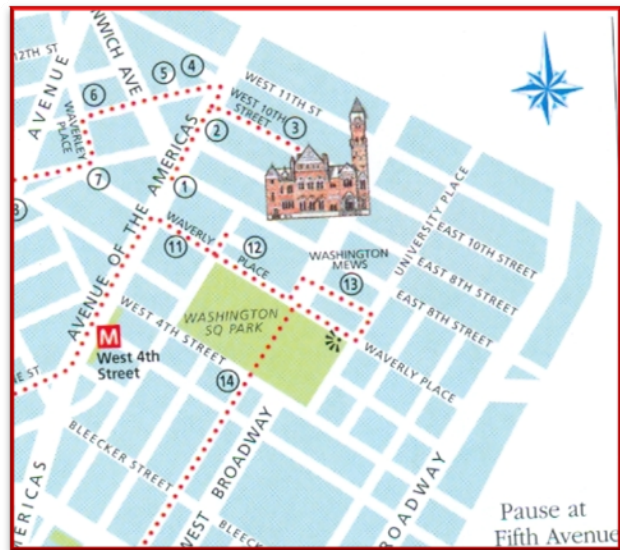
New York City, where Washington Square is located in the Greenwich Village neighborhood in Manhattan, is a city of roughly eight million people spread over 300 square miles (around 780 sq. kilometers). It is made up of five boroughs: Manhattan,

the Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn and Staten Island. New York's financial, economic and cultural center lies in Manhattan. Many of New York's oldest and newest buildings co-exist in Lower Manhattan. Midtown includes the Theater District and the exclusive shopping area of Fifth Avenue. Museum Mile lines the Upper East Side, along Central Park. To the North lies Harlem, traditionally a black community neighborhood. Established 500 years ago by the Dutch as New Amsterdam, it was renamed New York when they lost the colony to the English.

In the 19th Century New York grew rapidly and became a major port. From 1800 to 1900, its population grew from 79,000 to 3 million people. New York City became the country's cultural and entertainment hub. It continued to grow to its present state of density with the influx of immigration from 1900s till today. Today, its mix of cultural diversity has defined and enriched the city. Manhattan has grown skyward to accommodate an ever increasing population. The global city's information network spreads from this center to all over the world and has become the foremost link in the global network which includes London, Tokyo and more recently, Shanghai.



Washington Square:

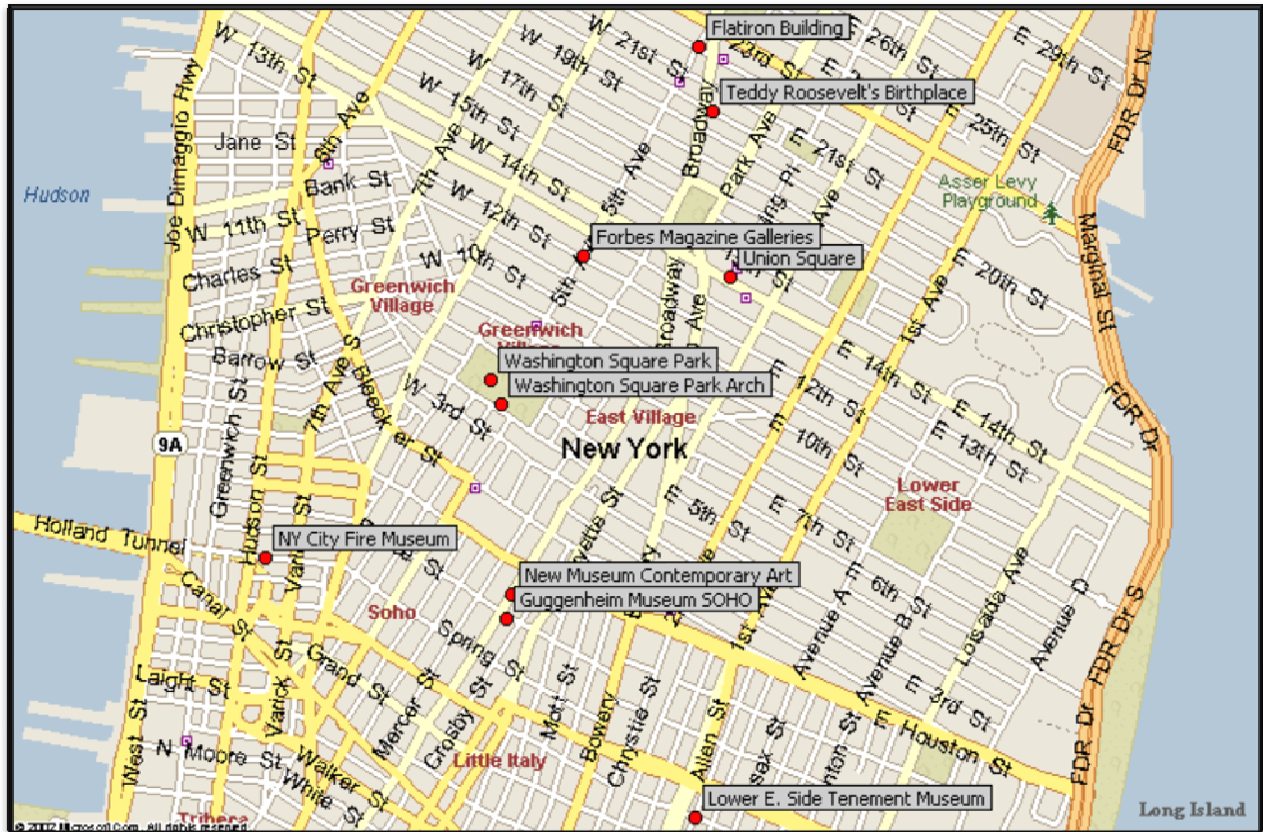


Map of Washington Square and vicinity

(from DK Witness Travel Guide on New York City, 2010.)



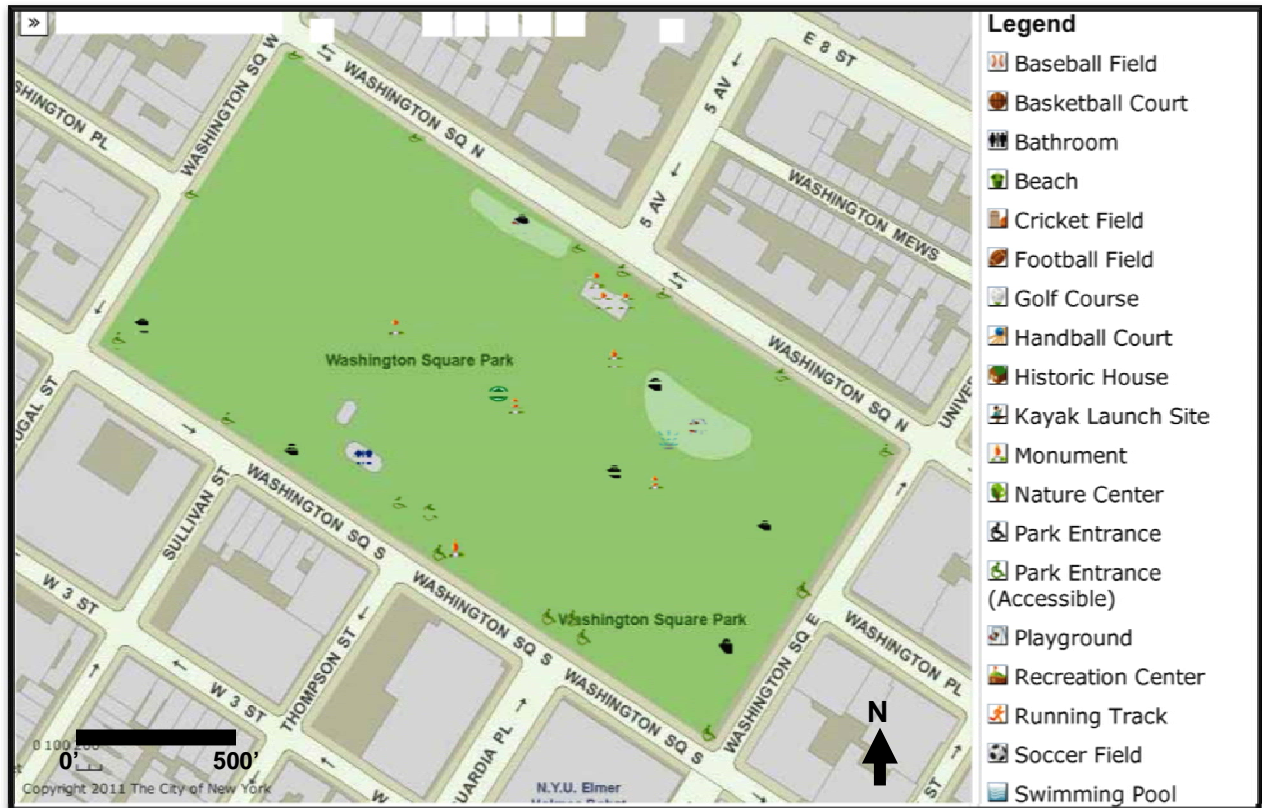
Map of Metro lines serving the vicinity of Washington Square Park



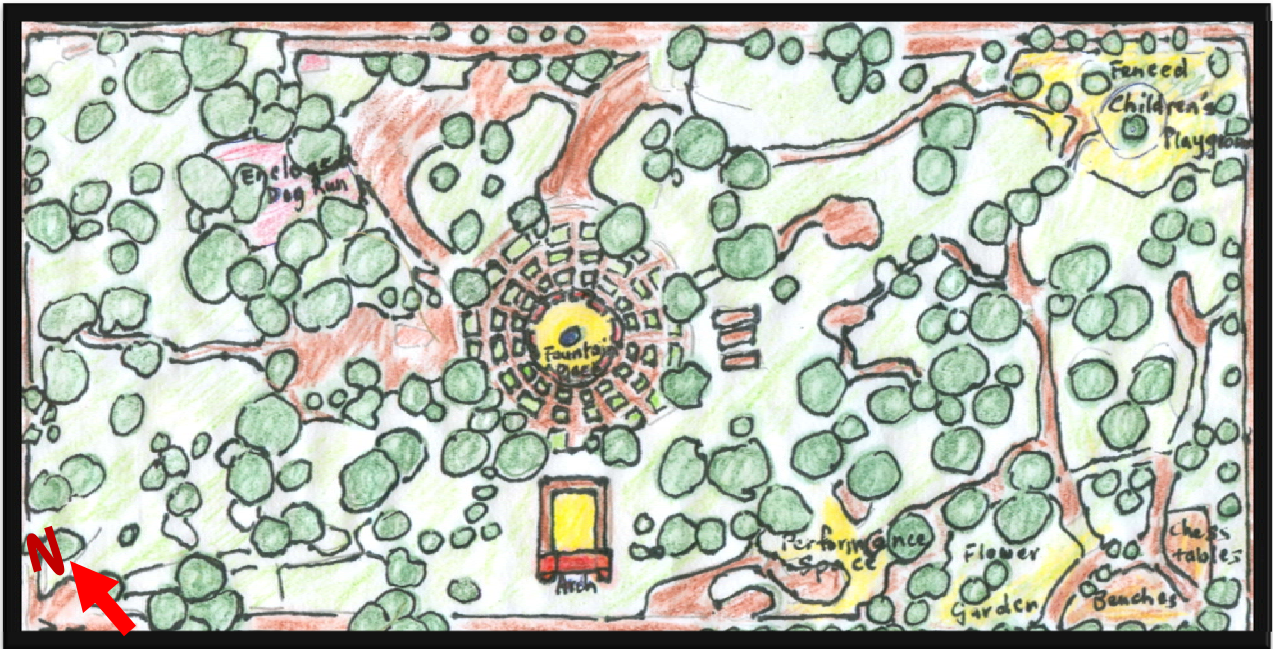
Map of Greenwich Village (from New York City DK Eyewitness Travel Guide, 2010)

Washington Square, one of the best-known of New York City's parks, is a landmark in the Manhattan neighborhood of Greenwich Village, with its strong legacy of counter-cultural and artistic edginess. Greenwich Village began as a country village, a place where city dwellers escaped in the yellow fever epidemic of 1822. The quilt pattern of its streets reflect that of early farm boundaries and streams and makes it attractive as a bohemian haven. It is an enclave for many (well-known) artists and writers. There is also a popular gay district. The Village is now an expensive place to live with its mix of may time period layers of architecture and housing. Near Washington Square it is dominated by student residences. The East Village attracts a trendy crowd and the

Meatpacking District is now dotted with smart boutiques and restaurants, all a short distance from Washington Square.



Washington Square Park and feeder streets: Map from Park website



Washington Square Park: Trees and Paths: Chinese Ink and Watercolor by the author

The Washington Square Park is famous as a meeting place and center for cultural activities in the neighborhood and the city. It is 9.75 acres (39,500 m²) in area and is operated by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Most of the buildings surrounding the park now belong to New York University (NYU). Some of the buildings have been built by NYU, others have been converted from their former uses into academic and residential buildings. Although NYU considers the park to be the

quad of the school's campus, Washington Square remains a public park. An open space with a tradition of nonconformity, the park's fountain area has long been one of the city's popular spots for residents and tourists. The university rents the park for its graduation ceremonies, and uses the Arch as a symbol.



Arch and the central fountain with the Empire State Building



The Garibaldi statue

Located at the foot of Fifth Avenue, which serves as a symbol of wealthy New York and is consistently ranked as one of the most expensive streets in the world, the park is bordered by Washington Square North (Waverly Place east and west of the park), Washington Square East (University Place north of the park), Washington Square South (West 4th Street east and west of the park), and Washington Square West (MacDougal Street north and south of the park).

While the Park contains many flower beds and trees, little of the park is used for plantings due to the paving. The two prominent features are Washington's Arch and a large fountain. It includes children's play areas, trees and gardens, paths to stroll on, a chess and scrabble playing area, park benches, picnic tables, commemorative statuary and two dog runs.

Those commemorated by statues and monuments include George Washington; Italian patriot and soldier Giuseppe Garibaldi, commander of the insurrectionist forces in Italy's struggle for unification, and Alexander Lyman Holley, the engineer who helped start the American steel industry with the invention of the Bessemer process for mass producing steel.

The New York City Police Department operates security cameras in the park. The New York University Department of Public Safety also keeps a watch on the park, and the city parks department has security officers who sometimes patrol the park. The area has a low crime rate in New York.

The park's history dates back to the 1826 when it was converted from a farmland to a square that was laid out and leveled as the Washington Military Parade Ground. These grounds were public spaces specified by the City to train militia companies responsible for the defense of the nation. To celebrate the centennial of George Washington's inauguration as president of the United States a large plaster and wood Memorial Arch was erected over Fifth Avenue on the north side of the square. The arch became so popular that a permanent version, modeled after the Arc de Triomphe in Paris by a city

architect, was erected. In 1918, two statues of George Washington were added to its north side.

The streets surrounding the square became the city's most desirable residential estate properties since the 1830s. In 1849 and 1850 the parade ground square was redesigned and converted into a park and more paths and a new fence were added. In 1871 it came under the control of the then new New York City Department of Parks and was re-designed again, with curving rather than straight paths. Between the 1900s and 2000s, renovations and additions were made to include more facilities and a fountain. In 1952 as part of an urban renewal project, a plan was drawn up to extend Fifth Avenue to cut through the park. Community protests forced the plan to be abandoned and as a result Washington Square Park became a park closed to traffic. Since the mid-20th Century, there has been tension between the city park officials and the community.

Since the mid- 1960s the park has been the venue for many civil rights and other democratic protest activities which have been woven with music and other performances. Both before and after World War II the park has been a center for many American artists, writers and activists. It was a gathering area for the Beat generation, folk and Hippie Movements and the setting for many film, literary and musical works. At the same time many leisure activities take place in diverse areas of the park. For instance, built-in outdoor chess tables on the southwest corner of the park encourage outdoor playing and throngs of watchers. The tables form the cornerstone of what is known as Manhattan's 'chess district' since the area nearby on Thompson Street

between West 3rd Street and Bleeker Street has many chess shops. The tables are also used for scrabble playing.

As with Shanghai's People's Park, Washington Square Park is usually filled with people, seemingly from all walks of life. The diversity of park spaces and plantings is resonant of the Daoist strategy to introduce diverse uses and users. The park is open and accessible to all and the flow of people resembles the flow of Daoist qi. The park provides a great variety of different kinds of places so that chess and players who wish to sit have benches, spaces for acrobatic performers, musical instrumentalists, meditative activities, strolling, eating lunches, running and even dog-walking. Included in the park is a dog compound, popular with people who bring their dogs. There is also a children's playground which is also well used. I saw a great variety of diverse park activities including a drama group rehearsal, an interview session for a local television documentary and folks playing their guitars. The park is also popular with senior citizens. As such the park shows evidence of an immersive multi-perspectivalism as a design strategy. It caters to flexible and adaptable usage which is evident from my exploration of the site.



People strolling in the park



A street entertainer in the Park



Chess players in the park's S.W. corner

Between 2007 till the present, the park has been undergoing a series of renovations, including repairing the Arch. The second phase of the reconstruction project will feature restored landscaping, plantings, and flower beds replacing excess asphalt in the remaining northeast, southeast, and southwest quadrants. The northeast playground will be upgraded, and a new play area in the southwest section will incorporate the "mounds," rebuilt slightly below grade to improve sightlines and minimize their impact on the park landscape, and covered with carpet-style synthetic turf for safety. A new performance stage will be built, the dog runs will be relocated and expanded, the Giuseppe Garibaldi Monument will be conserved and relocated, the petanque courts will be reconstructed, the paths will be repaved, and new lighting and fences will be added. The final phase will include a new park house with a new comfort station for the public and space for the Parks maintenance staff.

The following are photographs taken during my various walks in the Washington Square Park and they show a great diversity of spatial organizations and functions allowing for the Daoist multi-perspectival views and flexibility of usage:



Washington Park Restaurant by the eastern side of the Park entrance



Park eastern entrance



Pathway from east entrance to Park



People playing chess in a space on the east side



Another space where a person is reading



A space towards the center of the Park



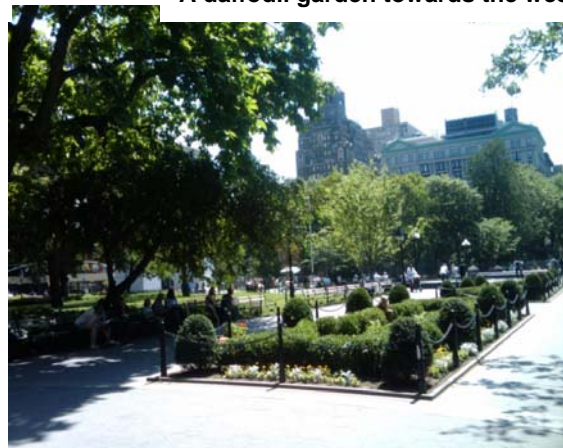
Wide walkway lined by benches in tree shade



A daffodil garden towards the west



In front of the Dog Run, two people rehearse a play



Another part of the park – a flower bed



A distant view of huge trees surrounding the



People sunning themselves in the central space; the arch is by the left top corner.



A man and his dog resting



Lunch in the shade



Looking towards the NYU: people soaking in the sun



People just relaxing in the park



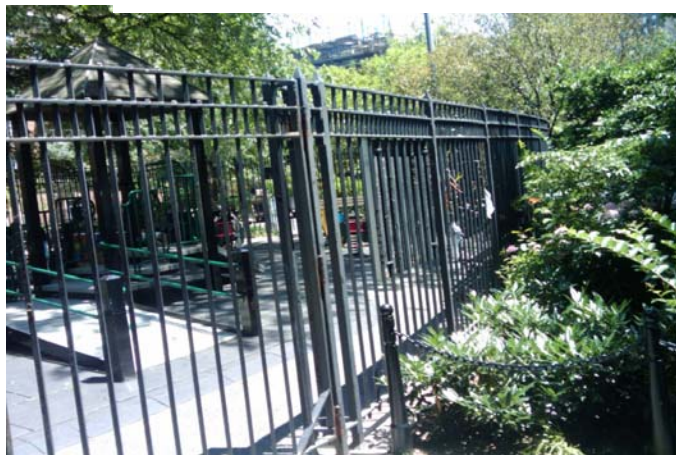
Looking towards the iconic Arch at the main entrance



Looking at the central space



Children's playground gate sign



Part of the fence surrounding the playground



A family having their lunch



Musicians by the Arch



A very wet day at the Park



The audience braving the rain



The park fountain competing with the rain



Park food vendors sheltering from the rain

To sum up, both Shanghai's People's Park and New York City's Washington Square Park can be considered vital and successful urban spaces which attract a great diversity of people and activities. Both squares have parks within them – green refuges in the midst of two extremely metropolitanized cities with hectic urban life for its dwellers and visitors. While each of them have different cultural and political histories, some

similarities can be discerned between the two urban spaces under study. The historical and socio-cultural contexts I have provided for the greater framework in which the sites are located contribute to the sense of the connections of these urban spaces to the greater cities. The cities provide a pool of diverse people from all walks of life and from other countries to congregate and enjoy these spaces. Within the closer vicinities of these two sites, we see a great variety of interesting and living environments, both physical and social, which attract people to visit and dwell in these public urban spaces.

These spaces have easy access through both public transport (metros for both People's Square and Washington Square and buses and trams for the former) and by walking or driving. Food is also easily available within the vicinity and they are surrounded by iconic buildings which provide historical interest. There is within the vicinity of these two spaces a layering of old and new in cultural and architectural forms. At the same time, we can discern some differences in the cultural use of public urban spaces. The Shanghainese, like most Chinese, through history and tradition, consider such public urban spaces to be spaces mainly for socializing. The American tradition of sitting on grass or picnicking is alien to them. So the paved area on the park is where they congregate to socialize with friends while they stroll and watch people. Public urban spaces tend to be an extension of their dwellings while for the Americans, the public urban space is perceived as a change from the site of 'home'.

Thus, looking through Daoist lenses, we can say that there exists the following:

1. Human-nature-landscape relationship in the urban context: - these spaces provide a balanced relationship between humans, the landscape and nature

providing both refuges for relaxation from hectic urban life as well as great potential for diverse activities to suit the visitors.

2. Adaptability and Flexibility of the spatial and volumetric organization of the built urban environment which is shown through the layering of old and new architectural forms and spaces through various time periods and still bear the traces and legacies of history and tradition. There is a continuum and flow both in time and space.
3. Diversity of the lived and living social environment is shown in the flexibility of the urban spaces both at ground level where the people operate socially and at a higher level where administrative and planning decisions seem to have been made without renting the 'messy' fabric of lived and living experiences. Easy access to transport, food and lodgings of various kinds and costs allow for the flow of people and energy towards these spaces.
4. Multi-perspectival and immersive urbanity is provided with a constant flux and change where socio-spatial operations can be made through walking experiences, jogging and kite-flying enabling multiple perspectives at ground level. These two are throbbing, living spaces, albeit the Chinese prefer to experience through more kinetic means like strolling, walking, dancing or kite-flying, while the New Yorkers prefer to do more sedentary activities like picnicking, chess-playing. It seems to me in my observation of the two parks that more users of the Shanghai People's Park prefer the shade – some people even carry umbrellas to shade from the sun – while more of those in Washington

Square Park prefer the sunlight. Consequently, my impression of the two parks seems to see one as darker and shadier and the second as lighter and brighter.



Shanghai People's Park: Abstract impression
Painting in Chinese ink, watercolor and corn silk by the author



Washington Square Park: Abstract impression
Painting in Chinese ink, watercolor and corn silk by the author

Chapter 5

Alleviating the Crisis of Urbanity: Daoist Re-turn (*Fan/Fu* and *Yi*)

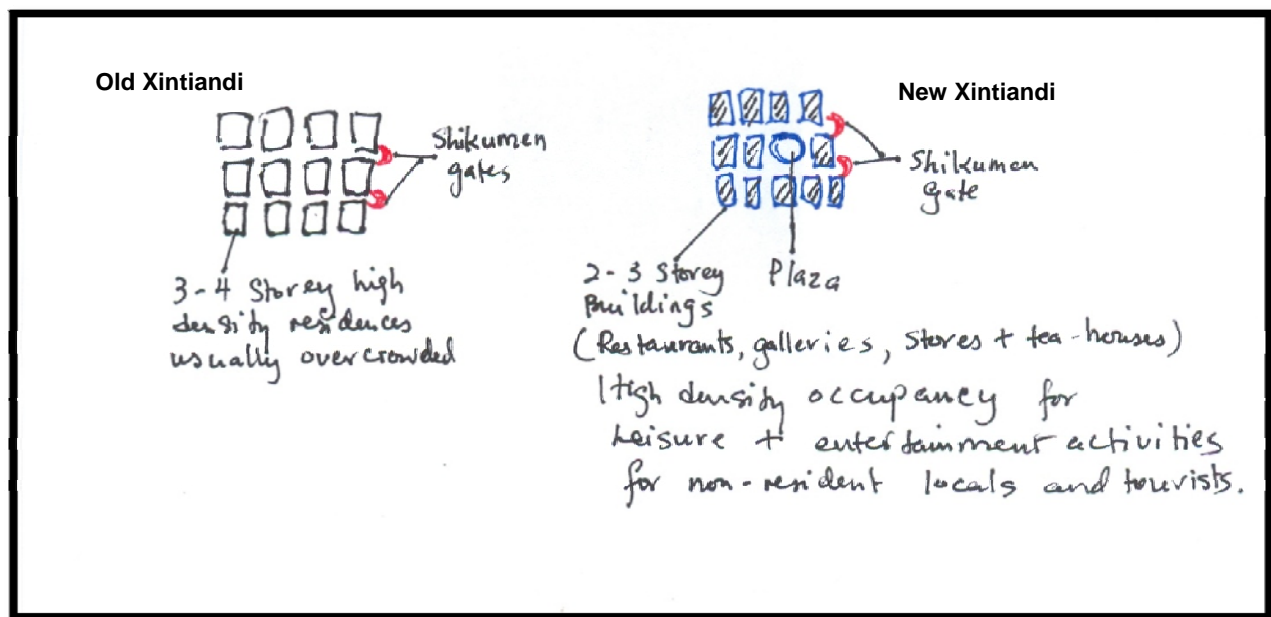
The Daoist *Re-turn*, a combination of *Fan/Fu* (return to the original source) and *Yi* (transformation or change) can be applied as an urban re-construction strategy that transforms old and disused or derelict places into new spatial functions. This constitutes the process of adapting old structures for functions other than those initially intended.

Contemporary urban adaptive re-use can be considered as stemming from this strategy which has a long history in Chinese building traditions.. When a structure's original use changes or is no longer needed, as with older buildings, urban designers and architects have the opportunity to change the primary function of the structure, while retaining some of the original architectural structure or details that make such buildings or spaces unique. Such transformation with a historic trace can cover a wide range of urban areas and building spaces. This can be considered a key strategy to redevelop in a more ecologically responsible way older structures which are close to the urban core. It can be seen as a compromise between historic preservation and demolition.

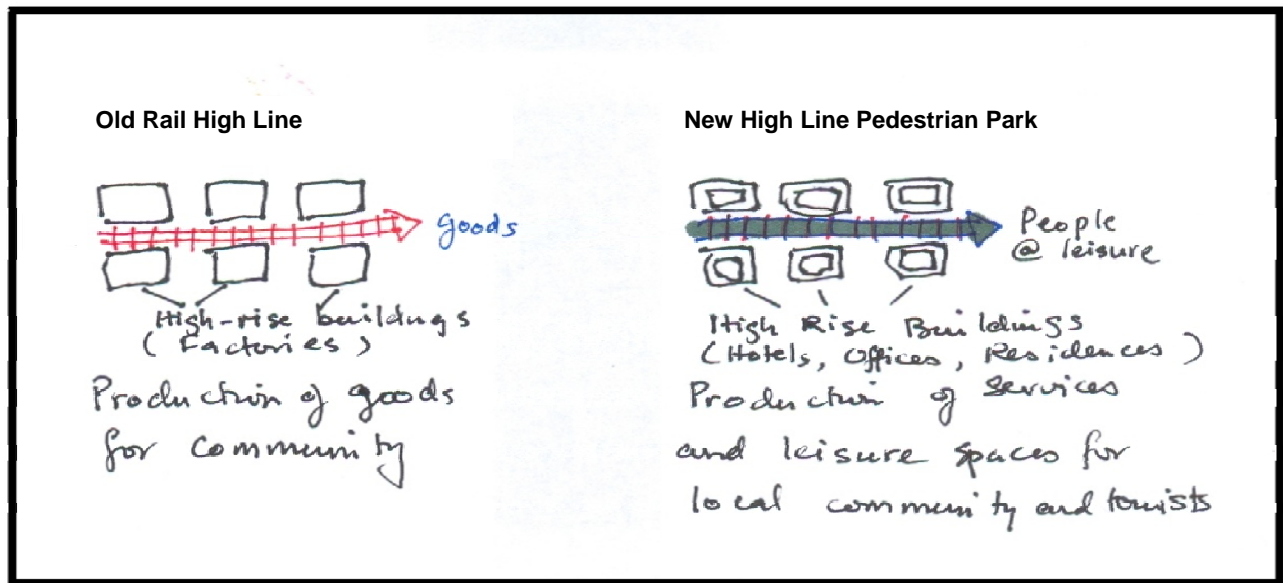
Two examples of the Daoist *Re-turn*, one from Shanghai and the other from New York City can be seen as examples of adaptive re-use that contribute to the city's regeneration and popular usage. Indeed the strategy of adaptive re-use can be

conceived as stemming from the Daoist Fan practiced in architectural renovations and redevelopment in traditional Chinese building architecture.

Shanghai's redeveloped Xintiandi is an entertainment, leisure and retail plaza in the heart of Shanghai at Luwan District. New York City's redeveloped High Line Park is a leisure park that winds through the center of the city in three neighborhoods. Both these places were developed within the last decade and they represent attempts to salvage some part of the history of the cities while nodding to commercial and community redevelopment.



Re-turn: Xintiandi in Shanghai



Re-turn: The High Line in New York City

By the urban theories of Mumford, Whyte, Amin and Castells among others (see Chapter 1), these places are vital and living spaces, full of energetic encounters and activities. Indeed, when I visited both places several times last year, they were well used, sometimes with throngs of people especially in Xintiandi. The visitors look to me to be a mixture of tourists from other parts of the respective countries and local residents.

In Daoist terms these places can also be considered under the notion of *Return* (*Fan/Fu*). One important Daoist concept not discussed in Chapter 3 is the notion of *Return* (*fan or fu*), meaning to 'return to the source'. (See chapter 2 for a discussion on this).

As Zhang (2002:120) says, Daoism posits change as in some ways cyclical and there is always a return to the source but in such a return , the situation is not precisely the same, for it carries the seed of a new development.

Thus one can cull this concept of *Return* to use as a strategy to create *Yi* (change/transformation) hand-in-hand with *Fan or Fu* (Return to the Origin). In complementing *Yi I* with *Return* we create a *Re-turn* which is not a wholesale returning to the original state (a strategy which historic preservation tends to adopt) but a design or developmental change without erasing the root/seed (origin) in order to attain *De* (Power/Force) to enable the natural blossoming of its potential power. Such a notion seems to me to be very similar to adaptive reuse.

Shanghai Xintiandi:



Xintiandi, Shanghai Location



Xintiandi in the Luwan District and Environs



Xintiandi in relation to location of Shanghai People's Park

These lilong shikumen houses were built in the French concessions from 1860s to the 1940s when Shanghai was an important trading port, especially in opium, though it also later grew as an international financial and banking center. Many European style architecture were built to accommodate individual and communal usage. The big commercial and banking firms were headed mostly by Europeans from Britain, France, Germany and America. During the this period, the Europeans controlled great swathes of land in the concession areas. As these were designated as European or international territories, they were not under Chinese jurisdictions. Property developed by the

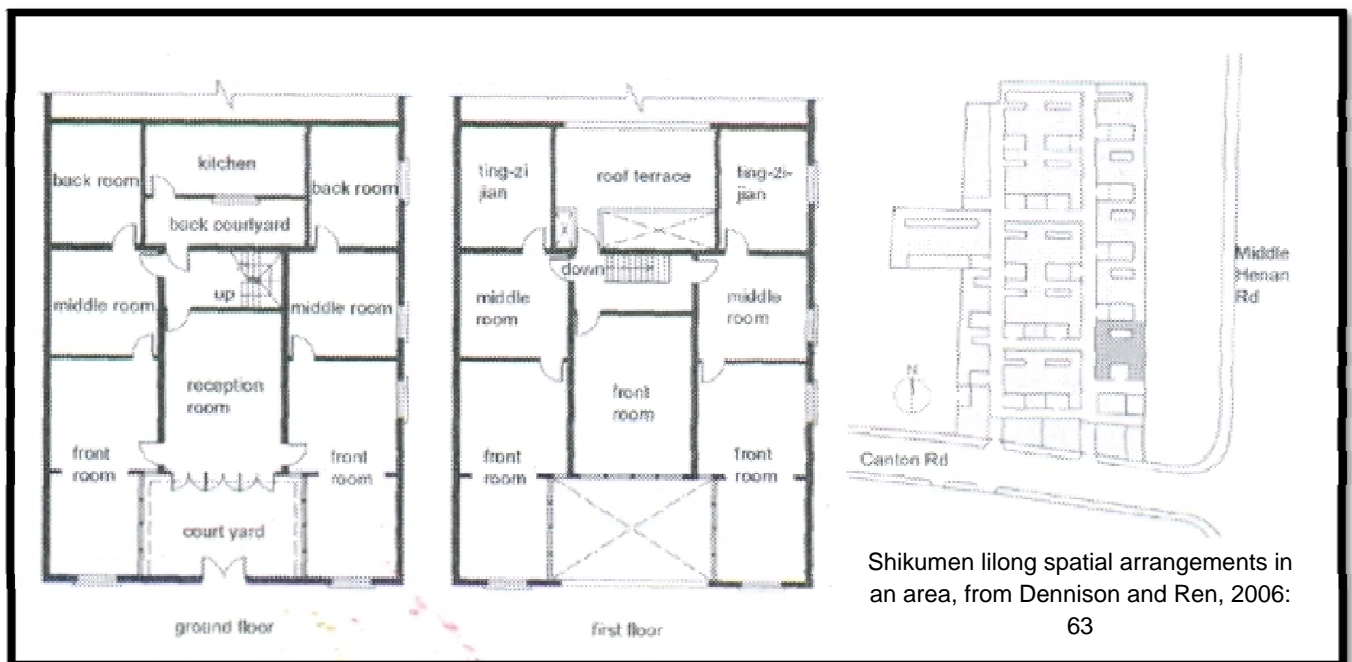
Europeans became a thriving business and vast numbers of dense dwellings were built to house the Chinese fleeing from the Taiping Rebellion and other unrests during the Qing Dynasty Rule to the Western concessions. Various civil unrests during the Nationalist Rule also drove many Chinese to settle within the Western concessions in Shanghai. The most densely built were the lilongs or lane apartment houses two to three-storeys high.

Lilong buildings were ubiquitous in Shanghai from 1870s till around the 1950s. Indeed, the first communist congress which gave birth to the concept of Communist Rule was held in a lilong Shikumen house, now part of the Xintiandi (Chinese: 新天地) urban complex. Xindianti was developed in 2002 by an American architectural firm in conjunction with a Hong-Kong-based construction company to transform what was mainly considered a derelict residential compound into a mixed commercial and residential district.

Even as late as 2005, the entire neighborhood around the current Xintiandi in Luwan District was made up of these old lane houses that were home to hundreds of families. Most of these shikumen lilongs in Shanghai have been torn down, like Beijing hutongs (single storey lane houses).

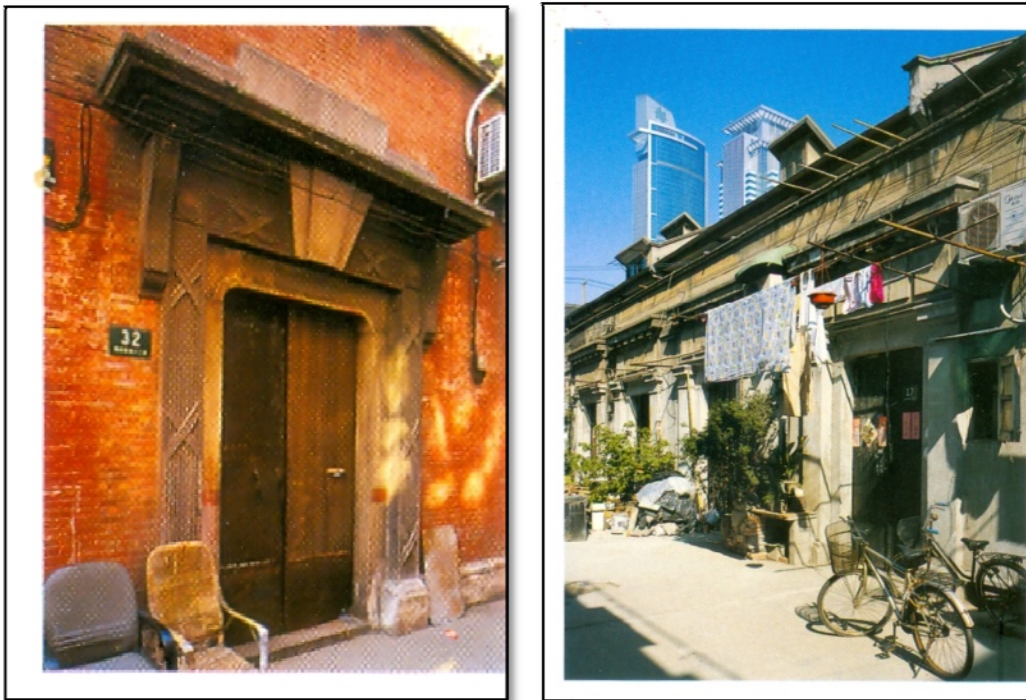
The architecture of Shanghai Shikumen, or stone gate (石库们), displays a double wooden front door usually framed elaborately in carved stone. Such gates served as access to both lanes and individual apartments each housing many families. These typical red and gray brick houses are interconnected row houses usually three stories high.

The lilong shikumen houses became popular and proliferated throughout Shanghai in the 1920s. Each building houses a courtyard behind the front stone gate through which one crosses to go to the kitchen and the back door. Each house has “tingzijian” (landing) rooms off of each floor’s landing creating small rooms off the main floor. These were usually rented out by families needing extra income and some of Shanghai’s most renowned literary figures. Dwelled in these rooms. The following depicts the floor plans of various types of these Shikumen lilongs ranging from the more spacious to the more dense dwellings:



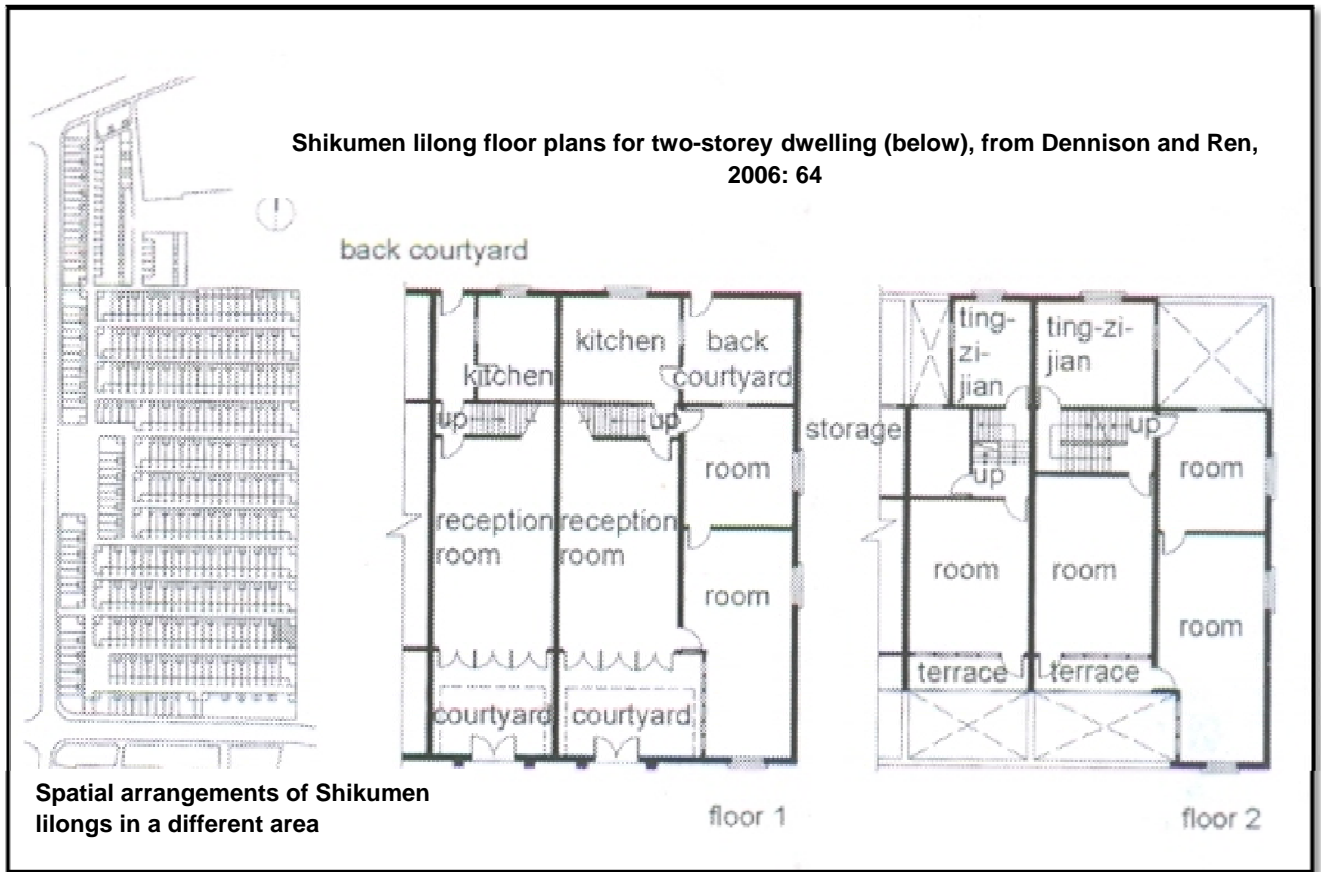
The above was a more spacious type (Type A) of lilong apartments accommodating the more wealthy middle classes. As can be seen, each of these apartment blocks contains a courtyard that is located just behind the front (shikumen) gate for the apartment block.

The courtyard is a private block urban space used by the residents of the whole block but also accessible to neighbors as the gate is usually open during daytime. Each storey of the three storey block is occupied by one family. Also on the ground floor is a back courtyard more usually for use by the block inhabitants. These courtyard spaces constitute community gathering places for the residents of the particular block and for visiting neighbors. The blocks of apartments are usually separated only by very narrow lanes where only two people can walk abreast. This kind of spatial arrangements which feature both narrow lanes and small courtyards for a whole cluster of five to six blocks ensure both a sense of intimate spatial experiences and safety for social gatherings.



**The Shikumen gate (above left) and the terraced row of the first type of lilongs (above, right),
from Dennison and Ren, 200:. 63**

The other type (Type B, see below) were for poorer families and were more densely packed, sometimes with three or four families living in a single apartment. Even in the less wealthy lilong shikumen apartments there are front courtyards behind the block gates. Often within each block there are also several stairs landing spaces called tianzifang which sometimes serve as gathering spaces within floor of each block as each storey is shared by several families. The landing spaces act as floor communal spaces. Since type B is even more densely packed, these spaces and the courtyards provide some spatial relief and also serve as communal spaces. People often bump into each other and side entrances to the block along the narrow lanes afford easier access to the block apartments. Over time due to crowding conditions these landing spaces were enclosed as rooms.



Shikumen lilongs (left) and another type of Shikumen gate (right) from Dennison and Ren, 2006: 63

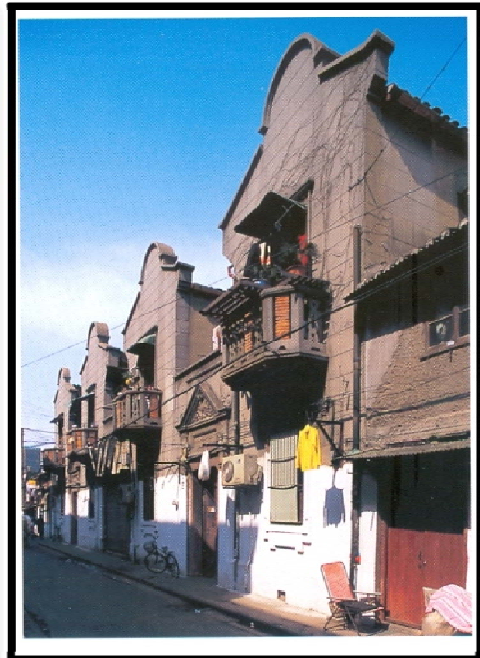


Floor plans of two other different types of three storey shikumen lilongs, Shikumen lilong floor plans for two-storey dwelling (above and below), from Dennison and Ren, 2006: 63





Shikumen lilong (above left) and lilongs in a cluster (above right) taken from Kuan and Rowe, 2004:75 – 6.



Lilong Shikumen houses in rows (above left and right), taken from Kuan and Rowe, 2004: 75 – 6.

Redevelopment of Shanghai Xintiandi



By retaining the original form of the Shikumen gate which provides the gateway to the narrow lilong lanes shoes scale and proportions are also retained, the architect, Benjamin Wood harks back to the *Fan* (return to the original source) of the place. The narrow lane behind the gate allows for a variety of access and egress to and from the different spaces such as restaurants, pubs and entertainment venues and enable the flow of qi around and within the Xintiandi complex. These lanes flow into the central area (the plaza of the whole south block).

Fan: Retaining the old style Shikumen Gate to one of the Lanes of Xintiandi, (taken from Xue, 2006: 36).

The Shikumen building combining both Chinese and Western architecture features, represented Shanghainese architectural style for dense dwellings for the ordinary people in the city's heyday during the 1920s. However, with the development of modern high-rise, first during the 1960s in the Soviet style of unremittingly gray, uniformly functional apartments and then in the 1980s rush to 'modernize' with mainly international style high-rise, the majority of Shikumen building clusters were demolished to make way for the more modern buildings. Most of the restaurants and cafes have both indoor and outdoor sitting areas, thus making optimal use of space when the climate permits from March to October or November. There is an active nightlife all the year round in Xintiandi, as there are numerous night clubs and jazz bars. Wood re-constituted the traditional shikumen homes in narrow alleys. Nearby the North Block is the historic site of the First congress of the Communist Party Hall, now a reconfigured into a museum.

The architect of Xintiandi, Benjamin Wood, an American from Boston, designed the space to recall the old Shikumen lilong and retained the antique walls, tiles and exterior of the Shikumen houses. However, the interiors embody totally different spatial arrangements- ranging from those to accommodate modern art galleries, bars and cafes to boutiques and restaurants. Walking in this space I experienced a sense of being in both a contemporary and a historic setting.

Xintiandi is a reclaimed and rebuilt shikumen lilong area comprising two neighborhoods of the terrace houses bordered by Tai Cang Road to the north, Zi Zhong Road to the south, Huang Pi to the East and Ma Dang Road to the west within the old French Concession territory near to old Chinatown. These roads bordering the Xintiandi North and South Neighborhoods block cluster buildings are vehicular routes for both public buses and private cars. The North Block neighborhood of Xintiandi, comprising 229,755 square feet, has been remodeled in the traditional shikumen style with its double wooden door framed by a stone arch over which is a carved stone plaque denoting the lane name. These stone gates lead to a lane lined with two or three-storied, terraces resembling the English terraced houses while maintaining a Chinese courtyard in each terraced building. It is now an urban public space with entertainment restaurants and retail shops. On the other hand, the South Block covers 250,000 sq. feet and consists of a glass-curtained building. This urban space has become very fashionable for both tourists and locals who come to stroll leisurely and also watch the parade of media celebrities who frequent the place. Easy transportation via the subway rail and buses

make this place easily accessible from all parts of Shanghai. Next to the complex is Taipingqiao Park.

In the re-development of these lilong shikumen buildings of Xintiandi, the narrow lanes separating buildings were retained and spaces for social gatherings redeveloped, harking back to the courtyards and tianzifangs were grouped together to provide a more expansive continuous plaza in the middle of the Xintiandi North cluster block for social gatherings, people watching and simply strolling around. Close building proximity was preserved with narrow lanes separating buildings within the block. Xintiandi North Block is an horizontal mix use area. The diagram below shows the Xintiandi gathering spaces with narrow circulation lanes in the neighborhoods. This kind of spatial arrangements, both retaining old narrow lanes and adding a plaza –like space continuously down the center of the cluster constitute both a return to the spatial meaning of the old lilongs and a transformation into a more spacious area for people to pool. This can be considered a Daoist Re-turn, comprising a historic trace with a changed situation. This situation means the place now accommodates social activities such as outdoor dining, sitting around and walking or standing and window shopping for those who use Xintiandi, whether they be locals or global tourists. (See Diagrams below).



Xintiandi Vicinity (Kuan and Rowe:2006:142)



Xintiandi Buildings and Spaces

The following table shows the features and activities in Xintiandi: The Daoist flow (qi)

Access	Scale of Buildings	Retail	Food & Entertainment	Activities	Public Space Features
Buses (7)	Two Storey buildings	Clothing (6)	Restaurants (42)	Walking	Seats
Metro Lines (2)	Three storey buildings	Craft (6)	Pubs (10)	Sitting	Benches
Taxis	6 -7 storey buildings (2, only in the South Block)	Art in galleries and shops (20)	Jazz Bars (6)	Talking in groups	Fountain
Pedestrian Footpaths from 3 – 6 feet wide		Salons (15)		People watching	Trees
		Dental and Medical Clinics (2)		Eating	Shade awnings



An aerial view of Xintiandi (above left, North Block at the bottom) and the street plan of the area (above right)
 (From http://archrecord.construction.com/ar_china/bwar/0604-16_ShuiOnLand.asp)

Moreover, by keeping to the height and scale of the original buildings with their facades intact, a sense of spatial intimacy and human scale is re-created. Unlike a lot of high rise retail buildings which front boulevards, these buildings are not overwhelming but attract people to come to use the small urban public spaces. Narrow lanes rather than wide boulevards which encourage vehicular traffic, accommodate community social life.

In 1949 the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established by Communist Rule. During the 1950s and 60s China was strongly influenced by Stalinist architectural forms

which were gray and ugly. From 1966 to 1976 the Cultural Revolution led to a chaotic period of political persecution of intellectuals, bourgeoisies and elites. This period saw the widespread destruction of historic and iconic buildings. In the 1980s the PRC under the Party Chairmanship of Deng Xiaoping opened up to global market forces and in 2002 it joins world Trade Organization.

Chinese State policies in all important aspects of life from family size, types of living conditions, education, work and jobs, travel and even leisure activities. Official culture pervades ways of social behavior and actions. Even today, with its freeing of market forces, many aspects of life are still under state control including housing and work life. In the 1980s, the official line became “It is glorious to be rich”. Yet a vast number of people live under the poverty line and in densely crowded living conditions. There is now a great disparity between the wealthy and the poor.

In Shanghai, in the 1980s, to accommodate the growing dense population, uniformly similar international style apartments were built. By the 1990s, especially in the cities, vast numbers of old, traditional but still serviceable buildings were destroyed. Some of these new apartments were flashy and obviously catered to luxurious living, but at the lower end of the scale there were vast numbers of people who lived in very densely crowded places, sometimes four family to a space of 1,000 square feet. On average, the floor area per person in Shanghai’s population of 19 million is calculated to be between 30 and 40 sq. feet.

At the same time, there is a lack of common open spaces in the city for alleviating the shortage of indoor spaces. Open park spaces are actually not common usage in Chinese culture. People in the past, and even now, usually congregate socially in streets and temple gardens or courtyards. (see Pu:2002)

The Xintiandi development won the national 'Innovation China 2001 – Architecture Award', 'AIA Hong Kong Citation 2002' and the 2003 Award for Excellence from US-based Urban Land Institute. Shui On Land Developers from Hong Kong first employed Sidmore,Owen and Merrill, who wanted to raze the site to make way for neo-classical buildings housing retail malls. The Developers, to their credit, was not satisfied with the SOM concept, so they employed Benjamin Wood, an American architect oversee the US\$170 million project. Wood's idea was to restore and re-build the neighborhood of old shikumen lilong apartment blocks with traditional courtyard-style of construction. The Xintiandi redevelopment was designed by Wood+Zapata and Nikken Sekkei International. The urban renewal is considered one of the first examples of the place-making approach in China. This construction displaced 2,500 shanghainese families.

According to Wood,

When I first came to Shanghai, in 1998, nobody cared about the area, not even the government; the stone door houses were considered to be expendable. The houses were perceived to be ordinary, even more ordinary than the hutongs in Beijing. I thought they were extraordinary, even more when later I was told that

these buildings only exist in Shanghai, which turns out to be not totally true.

(*Design* Wednesday, 1 July 2009 Written by JFK Miller)

There used to be around 600,000 lilongs in Shanghai but currently less than 50,000 are left and more would have been destroyed but the Xintiandi has made the Shanghai municipal government rethink the value of these houses in the case of Xintiandi. Wood did not faithfully attempt to preserve exactly the lilongs in this Xintiandi area. From what I can see when I visited the site last July, his design retained mostly the facades, the foundations and the spatial organizations of the lanes and the interstices between the apartments.

Wood tore down some buildings to make room, and put a lot of windows in where there were not any. The architect and builders tried to save some of the buildings but they were too derelict, so they rebuilt them and altered them a little. The spatial organizations, particularly, of the alleyways, were original.

The big promenade, Xingye Road (which divides the north and south neighborhood blocks) changed dramatically; there used to be a lot of original buildings. However, during the Cultural Revolution, the government built a lot of bomb shelters of very heavy concrete structures that went down a couple of floors. The same very stiff concrete walls were used on the upper three or four walls the first thing Wood did was to demolish all the bomb shelters. In doing so, he might have destroyed a bit of history,

but he also sensitively re-turn the buildings to a more original and aesthetic sensibility, more in concert with the spirit of re-turn to the original in Daoist strategy.

Xintiandi has created a space that belongs to the public, though it is not a big plaza, and therefore would exclude army parades and mass political meetings. As Wood intended, it is a public space “dedicated to the enjoyment of life”. This is quite a rare space which is not a park in China. Such small public spaces exist in Europe where people can feel “romantic about a place”. As Nolberg-Shulz in *Genius Loci* noted, one of the important features of a ‘sense of place’ is this intriguing aura, where mystery, heritage and cultural meaning combine to make place significant for its dwellers. Like the hutongs (one-storey lane houses) in Beijing, the fundamental idea of the lilongs (three to four-storey lane houses) is its spatial arrangements of lanes and the proximity of houses to lanes. This spatial idea has been preserved in Xintiandi which has retained the narrow lanes meandering in the way of the Daoist stream. Wood inserted a plaza-like common public space, an aggregate of the small courtyard spaces of the old Shikumen lilongs where people can gather for social and conversational activities as in the old communities. This is the empty Daoist center which pools the people from the lanes and neighborhoods as streams pool into a Daoist lake. This space is accessible to all and has certainly enhanced the quality of space-usage.

At the Xintiandi site, Wood’s idea of saving the structures and creating a walking district that would preserve the sense of community of old Shanghai was a great alternative

way of expressing Shanghai's newfound confidence and affluence. Wood understood that the relationship between new and old buildings would be crucial to maintaining a cultural identity while signaling the city's arrival in the 21st Century. This is the Daoist *Re-turn* in developmental transformation. This *Re-turn* embodies the return to the past origin of these houses where they were once the lilong Shikumen apartments. They now bear this trace of the return (*Fan*) the seed /source from which they have now undergone transformation (*l*) as a Re-turn into Xintiandi.

Unfortunately, Xintiandi's success has ironically led to the surrounding blocks of lilongs being demolished for luxury developments, diminishing the old sense of place. I agree with Wood that the real tragedy was not so much the disappearance of the old buildings as of the life on the streets. Xintiandi has brought back life on the streets to this area and I think, in this sense, it contributes to a kind of community life, both global and local to this public space.

Instead of demolishing the community's old derelict houses and replacing them with modern structures, as has been done in almost all of Shanghai's other residential neighborhoods, the developers painstakingly salvaged many elements of the area's Shikumen lane houses, including the outer walls, lintels, eaves, and wooden windows, and merged them with modern structures and fittings. Last June as one of the people walking the lanes of Xintiandi, I stepped on the gray flagstones and the red and black bricks, viewed lacquered doors, and stone gate doorframes, some of which are original, of the old Shanghai. Certainly I experienced a sense of the place bearing its cultural

legacy and also a sense that this is modern global Shanghai. The texture and the sounds, sights and smell of the place – its sensorium - evoked a mixture of the old and the new, and also a feeling of ambivalence - enchantment mixed and edged with some theoretical critical distance.

It seems to me that Xintiandi cannot just be dismissed or lauded as a commercial success. The care with which the architect and the developers took in melding with the context of the old shikumen lilongs, the evocation of the rough texture of carved stone, the lacquered wooden doors and window frames, the re-creation of the spatial arrangements (both of the courtyards and the lane spacing and relationships to the buildings) and re-adapting the functions of the space, is in line with the sensibility of Daoist *Re-turn*.

One of the strong points of Xintiandi is the enabling of indoor-outdoor dwelling, a feature that could be interpreted as Daoist natural flow. This was what the old shikumen lilongs fostered and in contemporary times, such spaces are both rare and socially sustainable. This is also in line with the Chinese building tradition of re-adapting and re-building rather than creating something completely new and different. In the transformation of Xintiandi , the original spatial organization was largely kept, although the pocket courtyards are pooled together as a central flowing space constituting the empty center. In this space more trees and other outdoor features such as a fountain and seats were added to enable the space to be more habitable and social. The original typology of the buildings, too, were retained in the North Block and in some cases, the buildings were

rebuilt to the same specifications as in the original mansion and other Shikumen buildings. The architect's design retained the small scale of the buildings and lane width, both harking back to the original scale and also to the Daoist concept of keeping buildings low rather than monumental. The original infrastructural scale and design of the building exterior have also been kept.

Architecture should pay attention to the cultural and historical legacy of a place, but it should do so without nostalgia, without simply imitating the traditional vernacular or freezing the past. Rather its sensibility is to edge this traditional sense of place with a more cosmopolitan or global inflection, a Daoist connection to the greater flow. In this sense, Xintiandi can be considered a kind of Daoist ecological transformation. The architecture has salvaged some of the cultural and historical legacies in terms of its materials, textures, visual forms and spatial arrangements – a Daoist Re-turn to the original. In experiential or phenomenological terms, Xintiandi is more complexly Shanghai, than nostalgically, old Shanghai.

Xintiandi can be considered as constituting something different from historic preservation which is intent on preserving all facets and functions of the original buildings. This kind of freezing strategy is not in line with the natural flow and spontaneity (zhi ran) of life in Daoist philosophy. Xintiandi, on the other hand, shows the architectural additions and subtractions which provide for new usage and can be said to also be a form of adaptive re-use through both transformations and a honoring (or return to the original idea) of the source. Thus while preserving a historic identity by its

site and the facades, foundational structures and the buildings' spatial relationships to each other and to the lanes, Xintiandi, has exemplified the kind of sensitive spatial and architectural meaning enacting its *De* (potential). Xintiandi is an example of developmental spaces that can be sensitively designed to follow the *zhiran qi* (natural flow/energy) of the cultural and historical context of the city. Design is what makes Xin Tian Di so attractive, inside and out. Each of the two to three-story Shikumen looks unique, reflecting the exquisitely-preserved twists and turns of an evolving neighborhood, over the decades.

According to travel reporter Ron Gluckman, the place has been packed day and night since a second phase added more outlets along with cinemas, ice cream parlors and craft booths in 2002. He also quoted Bob Boyce owner of several restaurants and pubs in town as saying "Xin Tian Di has transformed nightlife and entertainment in Shanghai," and Boyce said that "Sometimes I just sit here and watch all the people go by. That's the real beauty of Xin Tian Di. You see people, all kinds of people, from all over the world, all enjoying themselves." Gluckman also quoted a local, saying that "It's beautiful," says one old man in his late 70s on a visit to Xin Tian Di. "It's not like Shanghai was; nothing can be like that again. This is new, but it keeps the flavor of old Shanghai."

The project has proven a critical as well as commercial success. Local historian Tess Johnston, author of "A Last Look: Western Architecture in Old Shanghai" concedes concerns at the outset that the gentrification of the old district would ruin its charm. "But

I've come around. I've seen the alternative and realize the future of Shanghai is more Xintiandi's. Benjamin Wood was also quoted as saying that "It's the only place in the world I know where you can watch pop culture created in front of you. There is so much energy. It's like Paris in the 1930s," he says. "There is so much artistic freedom. That might sound funny, but it's amazing. Things happen fast here." Wood himself has opened his own bar in Xintiandi, interestingly called *Design Resource*, a favorite hangout of architects and artists in Shanghai. Certainly a lot of people can congregate at Xintiandi because it is very accessible by public transportation such as Metro lines, buses and taxis. At the same time, the place is also open to the nearby neighborhoods. Thus the flowing qi of the people in Xintiandi, the diversity of myriad things, the place's non-monumentality, its lowly scale and especially, a transformation heeding the Return (fan) to the original source of historical materiality and organization of spaces while ensuring a multi-perspectivalism in community and social activities all constitute a manifestation of the Daoist concepts and strategies of viable space making. Xintiandi is unique in Shanghai in being a plaza that works in Chinese space and contributes to the diversity of public spaces in the city. (Ron Gluckman: *July 2003 issue of Dynasty, the China Airlines magazine*)

Walking through Xintiandi in June 2010, pictures taken by myself (below)



While visiting Shanghai in June 2010, I walked through different lane spaces typical of Xintiandi affording a Daoist multi-perspectivalism (above)



Narrow lanes, typical of the Xintiandi layout of the North Block, provide multiple points of access retaining the old style of the Shikumen lilong spatial arrangements and harking back to the Fan giving them an attractive and feel, encourage exploration of these spaces.



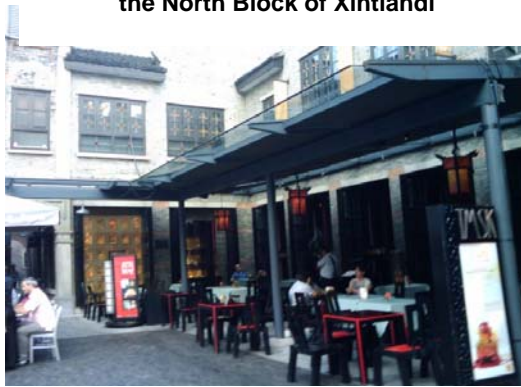
A monolithic high-rise Building fringing the South Block of Xintiandi.(left)The North block was originally envisioned by the developers to consists of these high –rise but the architect persuaded the developer to return the place to is former feel, a Fan strategy combined with transformational development of the interior spatial arrangements and combining all the original courtyard spaces into a central open plaza, a I strategy.



At the edge of the plaza in the middle of the North Block of Xintiandi



Strollers and diners in the plaza spaces



More outdoor dining at Xintiandi



Local and international visitors window shopping at Xintiandi



**More outdoor sitting and dining scenes
at Xintiandi restaurants**



**Strollers in the plaza space of North
Block Xintiandi**

Pictures (below) showing demolition and re-construction of Shikumen lilong dwellings in various stages before its transformation (Yi).

(From http://home.wangjianshuo.com/archives/20060514_how_xintiandi_was_built.htm).



The demolition and return to chaos:



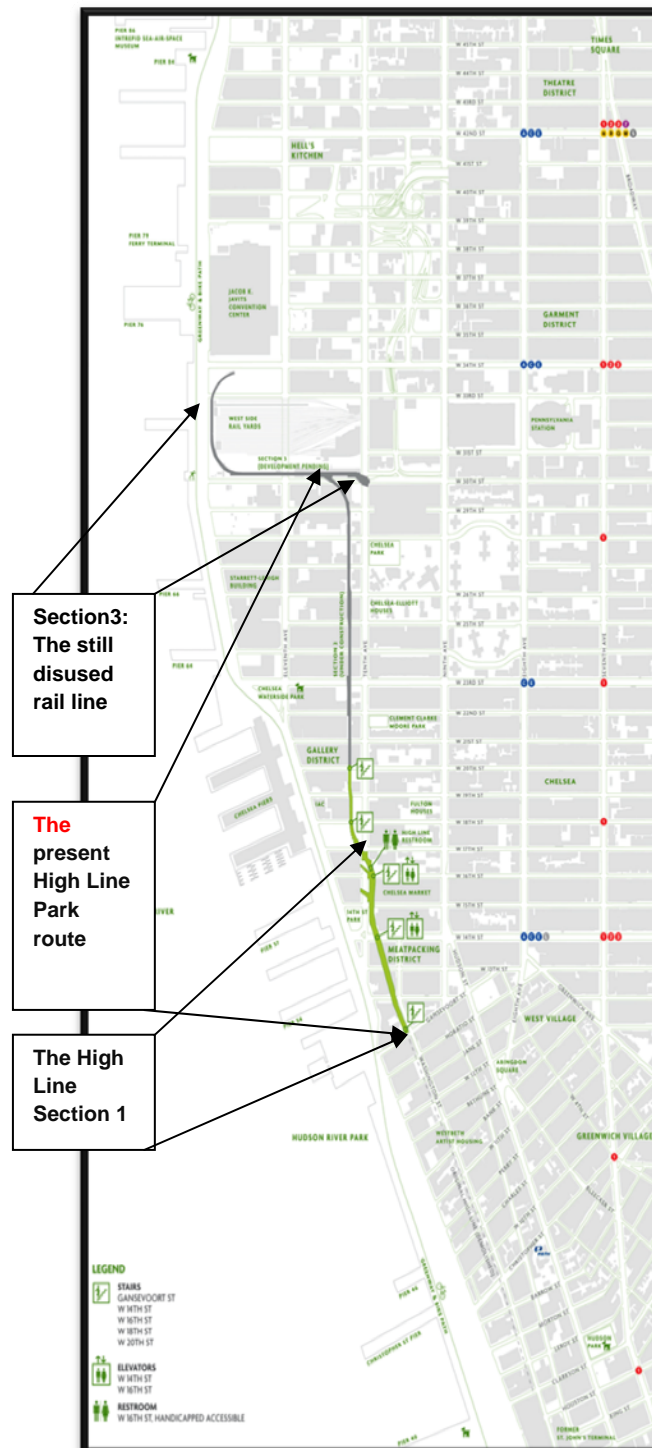
The old use:



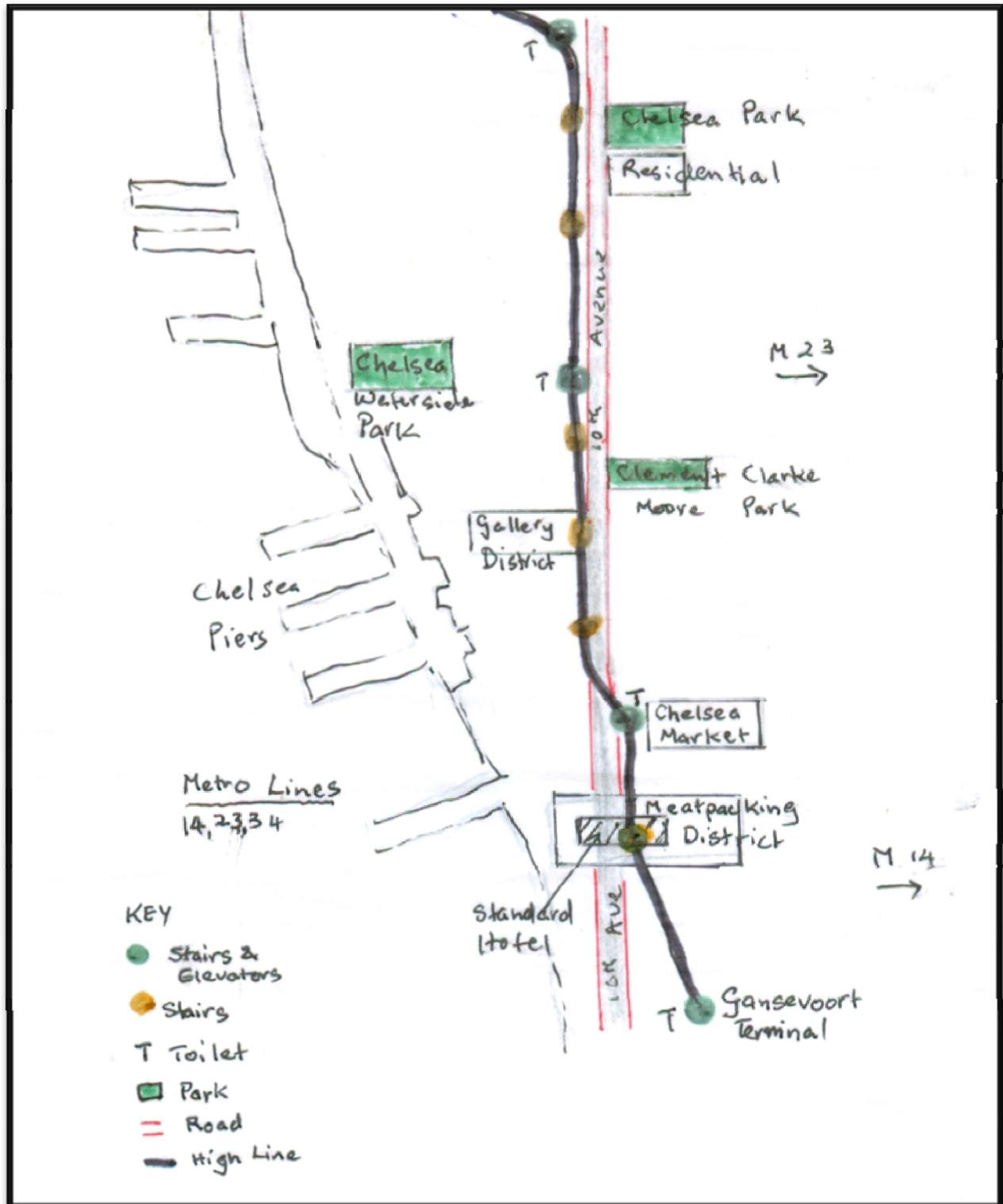
The process of transformation (*Yi*) and *Re-turn* into the new Xintiandi



New York City: The High Line



Map of the High Line Route through West Manhattan



The present High Line Pedestrian Walkway

Like Xintiandi in Shanghai, the New York City's High Line as an adaptive reuse development can be considered in relation to the Daoist concept of Return and Re-turn (Return in conjunction with transformation, *(I)*). The c Line is a transformed elevated rail track which is now an outdoor urban space stretching across three neighborhoods from West 10th to West 30th Streets. It allows people to walk, sit and participate in organized and unorganized events and activities. The Line stretches one and a half miles long and is about 40 feet wide.

Located on Manhattan's West Side, the High Line runs from Gansevoort Street in the Meatpacking district to 34th street between 10th and 11th avenues. Section one of the High Line opened to the public on June 9th 2009 and runs from Gansevoort Street to West 20th Street. Section Two opened in July 2011 and runs from West 20th to West 30th Street. The third section is still undeveloped, but an initial donation of \$20 million has recently been received and planning for its development will start soon. This part of the rail line when developed will add another half mile to the pedestrian parkway



People at the High Line Park sitting, walking and relaxing in a Daoist relationship to nature

The High Line Park is 30 feet above the ground. It is open from 7 am to 8 pm daily and the last entrance to the park is at 7:45 pm. Originally the rail High Line was constructed in the 1930s to lift dangerous freight trains off Manhattan streets funded by the owners of the factories through which it ran.

Presently, the High Line is operated under the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. The city of New York works with Friends of the High Line which is charged with raising private funds for the park and over-seeing its maintenance and operations. It runs through the west side neighborhood of the Meatpacking District, West Chelsea and the southernmost part Clinton/Hell's Kitchen. The pedestrian parkway features an integrated landscape design by landscape architects, James Corner Field Operations, with architects Diller Scofidio + Renfro, combining meandering concrete pathways with naturalistic plantings. It also includes fixed and movable seating, lighting and special features and has eight points for street

level access that will be located every two to three blocks. Both elevators and stairs are included for four of the access points and the other four have stairs entry way..

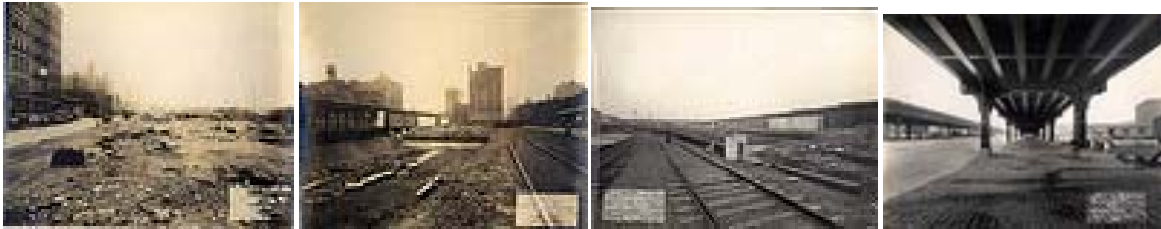


**An aerial view of the High Line showing clearly the human-nature related landscape
amidst the concrete of the urban built environment**

Historical Context

The High Line opened to trains in 1934 and originally ran from 34th Street to St. John's park terminal at Spring Street. Designed to go through the center of blocks, it connected directly to factories and warehouses, and a lot of trains to roll right inside building. Raw and manufactured goods were transported and unloaded without

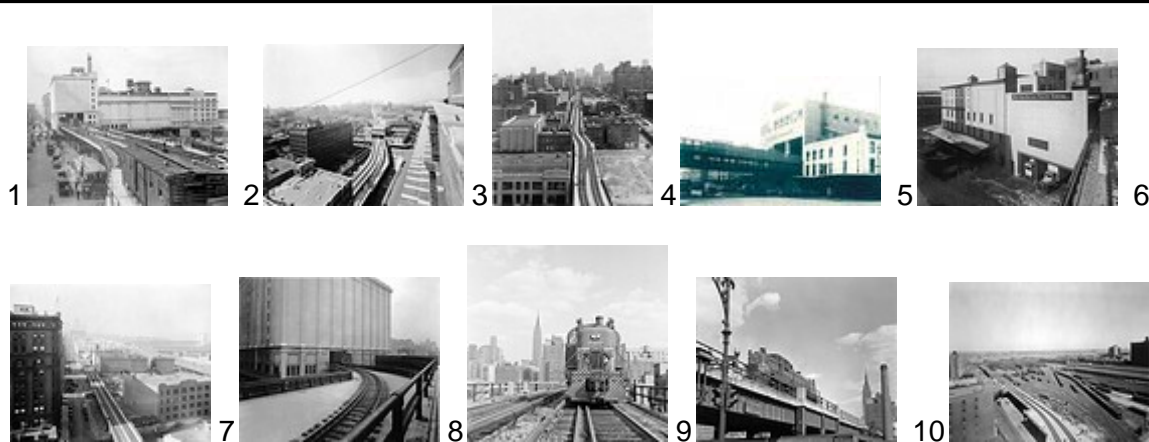
disturbing traffic on the streets. The pictures below show the disused rail line (Taken from High Line Website.)



The decay before the transformation (Daoist 1) of the rail line into a walk-able park



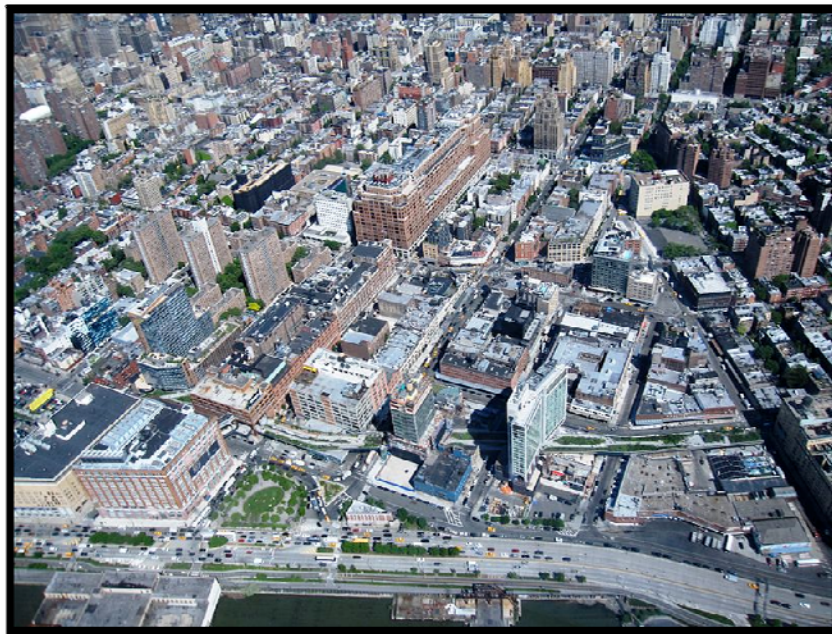
The rail also passed underneath the Western Electric complex at Washington Street and this section has survived today and is not connected to the rest of the developed park. In the 1950s there was a drop in rail traffic throughout the nations, as the number of interstate trucking grew. The southernmost section of the line starting at Gansevoort Street, ran down Washington Street and represented almost half of the line. It was demolished in the 1960s. In 1980, the last train ran with three carloads of frozen turkeys. The unused line became known to the few urban explorers and local residents for the tough drought-tolerant wild grasses, shrubs and trees which had sprung up along the gravel of the abandoned railway.



**The original rail high line (the source of the Daoist *Yi*) in operation in the 1930s:
Before the Daoist *Re-turn* combining *Fan* and *Yi***

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Gansevoort st | 6. St John's Park Terminal |
| 2. View at 14th st | 7. Merchants' refrigerating warehouse |
| 3. View north from 17 th st | 8. locomotive on the line |
| 4. 14 th st crossing | 9. locomotive on the high line |
| 5. Meat packing district | 10. Westside Rail yard |

The three neighborhoods of Manhattan borough that the High Line passes through are the Meatpacking District, Chelsea and Hell's Kitchen/Clinton. The Meatpacking District runs roughly from West 14th Street south to Gansevoort Street, and from the Hudson River east to Hudson Street, although recently it is considered to extend north to West 16th Street and east beyond Hudson Street. As the name suggests, this neighborhood used to be the meat packing industrial heart of the city. Around 1900 it had 250 slaughterhouses and packing plants, grouped mostly at the Gansevoort Market. However, by the 1980s the industry declined and the sparsely populated industrial area became known as a center for drug dealing and prostitution. Gentrification started in the late 1990s and high-end boutiques and nightclubs catering to young professionals opened. The slaughterhouses and factories have now been preserved as an historic area.



Meatpacking District: Part of the ecology of the High Line

Chelsea, the second neighborhood lies on the West Side of Manhattan.. The district's boundaries are roughly 14th Street to the south, 30th Street to the north, the western boundary of the Ladies' Mile Historic District – which lies between the Avenue of the Americas (Sixth Avenue) and Seventh Avenue – to the east, and the Hudson River and West Street to the west. To the north of Chelsea is the neighborhood of Hell's Kitchen, also known as "Clinton," and to the southwest is the Meatpacking District while to the southeast is the West Village.

Chelsea Historic District includes contiguous blocks containing particularly significant examples of period architecture. However, in 1847 the Hudson River Railroad laid its freight tracks up a right-of-way between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, separating Chelsea from the Hudson River waterfront. The industrialization of western Chelsea followed, bringing immigrant populations from many countries to work in the factories, including a large number of Irish immigrants, who work on the Hudson River piers that lined the nearby waterfront and the truck terminals integrated with the freight railroad spur. This period has been the setting of the film, *Gangs of New York*. Thus this district has been bifurcated into the so-called genteel and the rough parts of the city. Today this district is dominated by art galleries and retail stores. Ethnic restaurants and clothing boutiques are also plentiful.



**Part of the 23rd Street facade of the London Terrace apartment complex,
as seen from the High Line at 20th Street (picture taken from Wikipedia)**

Hell's Kitchen, also known as Clinton and Midtown West, where the now disused part of the High Line is located, lies between 34th Street and 59th Street, from 8th Avenue to the Hudson River. This neighborhood provides transportation, hospital and warehouse infrastructure support to the Midtown Manhattan business district. Its gritty reputation depressed real estate prices in the area relative to much of the rest of Manhattan until the early 1990s. Since then, rent prices have increased enormously, with current rent prices above the Manhattan average.

Over the last three decades of the 20th century and into the new millennium, Hell's Kitchen which was once a bastion of poor and working-class Irish Americans, has undergone change as a result of its proximity to Midtown. Like the other two district described earlier, Hell's Kitchen has been gentrified and today many actors reside in the neighborhood because it is near the Broadway theaters and Actors Studio training school.



Restaurant Row on West 46th Street, Hell's Kitchen

As these neighborhoods became increasingly genteel and the elevated rail line became increasingly derelict, the communities of these districts began to push for the idea of re-constructing the High Line.

In the 1990s, Friends of the High Line, a non-profit organization was formed and in 1999 they advocated for the Line's preservation and re-use as a public open space. This initiated the transformation (Yi) of the High Line into the present day pedestrian park. It can be said that in seeking to transform the High Line the community was also concerned about memorializing the past rail line and wanted to keep the trace of its original source thus honoring its Fan (Daoist return to the original source) even as the redevelopment or transformation (Yi) was envisioned.



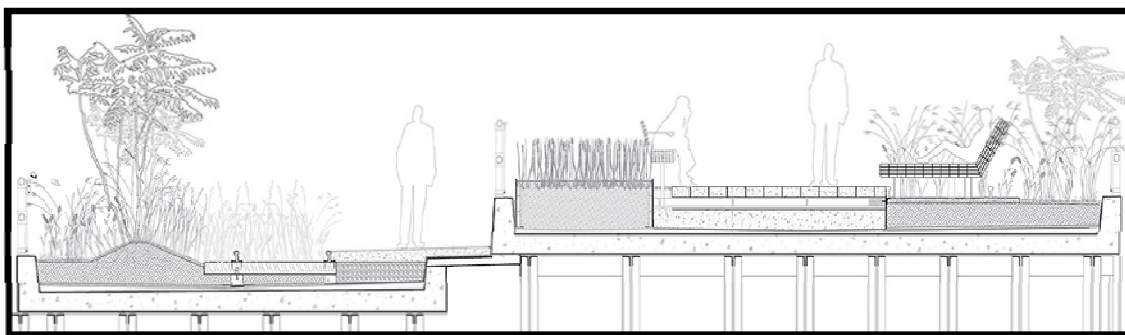
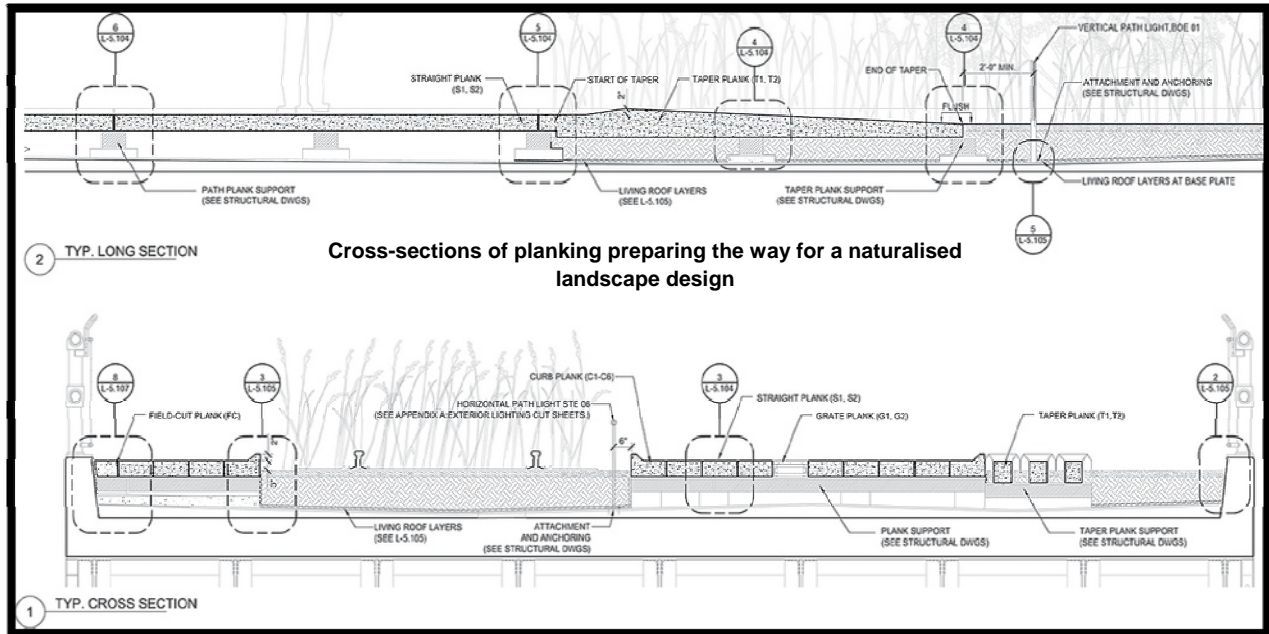
Community input sessions in 2003

As community support for the public development of the High Line for pedestrian use grew, city funding was allocated in 2004. For almost 20 years the line was in disrepair and was slated for demolition, although the riveted steel and elevated structure was basically sound. Along most of the route, long grasses, plants and shrubs and rugged trees grew.

In 1999, friends of the High Line and community groups pushed the idea of turning it into an elevated park or greenway similar to the Promenade Plantée in Paris. The New York City government committed \$50 million to establish the proposed park in 2004. In 2005, the U.S. Federal Service Transportation Board issued a certificate of interim rail use, along the city to remove most of the Line from the National Railway System.

The construction of the High Line park began on April 10th 2006. It was designed by the James Corner's New York-based landscape architecture firm Field Operation and architects Diller Scofidio + Renfro, with planting design from Piet Oudolf of the

Netherlands and engineering design by Buro Happold as shown below, drawings taken from the Oudolf postings on the High Line website



Sundeck water feature and rail preserve: Re -turning to the source of

High Line Park Construction: Site Prep, Installation of Section and Landscaping: The Daoist *Re-turn*



Preparation for site transformation (YI)



Rail frogs and tracks collections: Returning to the source of the original (*Fan*)

The process of construction including site preparation, installing the planking, landscaping and planting of the first section of the Line took three years from 2006 to 2009. The infrastructure was reinforced and the rail frogs and tracks were re-installed as features of the landscaped garden.

The first section of the High Line Park which runs from 10th to 20th Streets was opened in June 2009. The second section which runs from 21st to 30th Street was recently completed in June 2011.



Site prep and painting



landscape construction



planting

The High Line was originally a rail line built on ground level, but in the 1930s, it was elevated and went through three neighborhoods in Manhattan for industrial and transportation uses. These neighborhoods which contained warehouses and factories have now become gentrified and the factories and warehouse have been converted to

Construction Process 2006 - 2008



10th ave square



the high line 1999 – 2006



plank and track installation



Installing sundeck seating



14th st stair construction

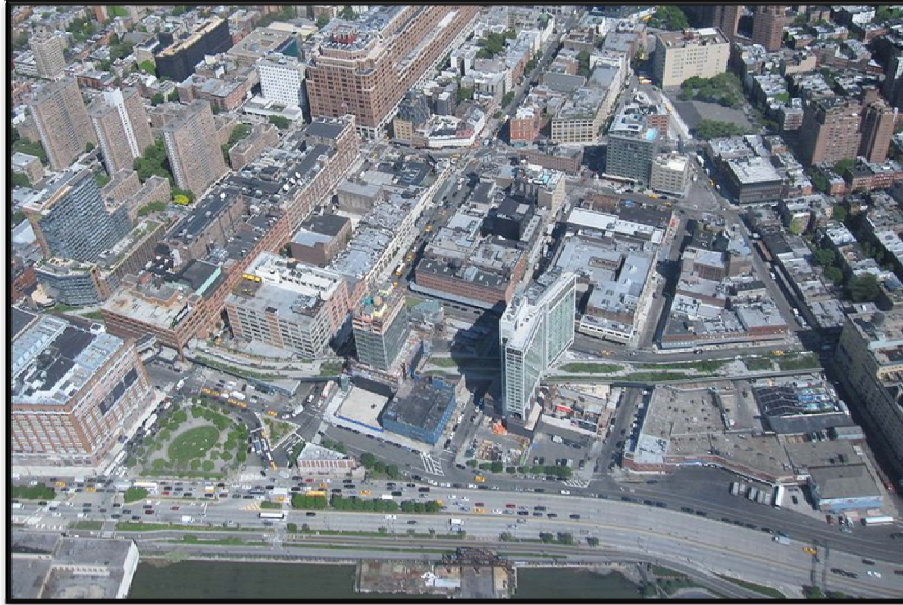


Installing lighting

The first section of the High Line runs through the Meatpacking District. This district once was home to more than 250 slaughter houses and meat packing plants. The High Line was built to carry freight trains full of meat and other goods directly to the upper floors of these meat packing plants and factories.

Before then, the line was built with trains running on street level. As industrial users decline in New York City, the Meatpacking District has seen a conversion of its cobblestone streets and low lying industrial buildings to being homes to many restaurants, night clubs, design and photography studios. At the High Line's southern end in the corner of Gansevoort Street and Washington Street is the future location of a new building – the Museum of American Art. The museum is projected to open in 2012.

North of the Meatpacking District is the district of West Chelsea. This is where the majority of the High Line is located. Like the Meatpacking District, West Chelsea was also industrial area with large factories and warehouses lining the streets and avenues. However, it is now home to the world's largest concentration of art galleries.



Aerial view of the southernmost part of the High Line in the Meatpacking District (2010)

Much of West Chelsea was transformed to allow for the High Lines to be used in 2005 and to encourage the continued use of former industrial spaces as an entertainment district. Chelsea is also residential, and its tree-lined blocks of historic townhouses has in it the destination of Chelsea's historic district in 1970 with an extension added in 1981.



Main line (overhead) and the two sidings at Chelsea Market

The northern most section of the High Line runs through the southern section of the Hell's Kitchen/ Clinton neighborhood. The future of the redevelopment of this section to continue with the present two redeveloped sections is uncertain. However, the neighborhood is likely to undergo significant changes to its environment in the next decade or so.



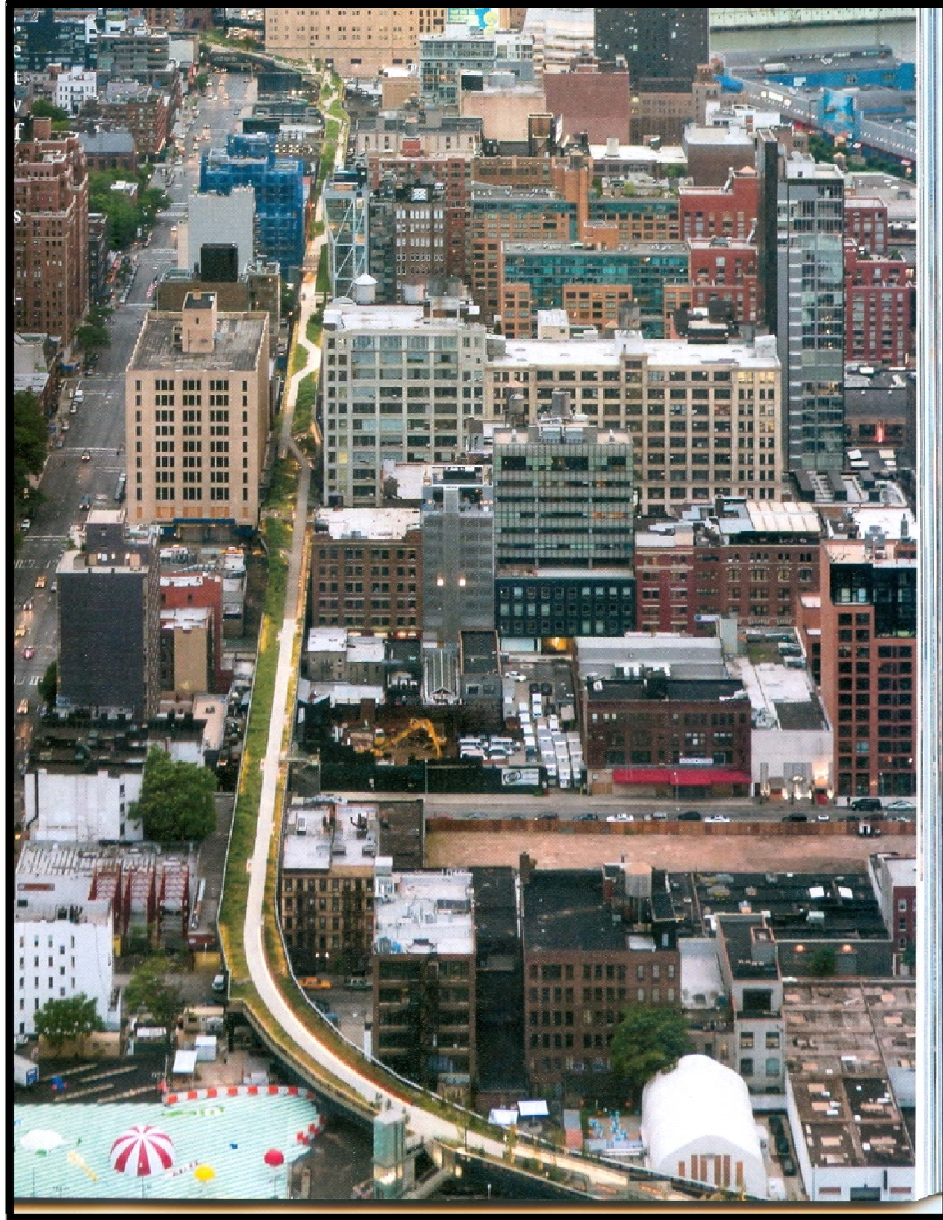
Southern terminus (above) a meatpacking business on Washington and Gansevoort Streets,
before renovation (2005)

Park Usage: Attractions, leisure, and cultural landscapes.

In redesigning the old High Line 30 feet above the ground into the new pedestrian park walkway, the architects harked back to the original source (*Fan*) of the High Line while at the same time created its transformation (*Yi*) into a different landscape and function. In this there is a Daoist strategy of *Re-turn* whereby *Fan* and *Yi* are combined to construct a contemporary line with the trace of its past. The High Line has been re-

adapted as a park for cultural and leisure activities which include a new landscape made from the old track line. The associated landscape that grew on the disused tracks has now been reshaped into naturalized plantings with unexpected views of the city and of the Hudson River.

Concrete walkways made of pebble dash, swell and constrict the trail swinging from side to side and dividing into concrete tines that narrow the landscape with the planting embedded in the railway road gravel mulch. Stretches of the track and slippers which recall the High Line's formerly used portions of the track are now adaptively reused for rolling lounges positioned for river views.



**The High Line wends through the City neighborhoods: Connecting concrete
to a swath of nature (Taken from Architecture Record ,2011:. 87)**

Rugged meadows of plants including 10 different species of clump forming grasses, and coneflowers with scattered strands of sumac and smoked bush line the track. At the Gansevoort end is a grove of mixed species of bush. This flora from the old rail line

becomes the seed for the plantings for the new line, using the Daoist strategies of both *Re-turn (Fan with Yi)* and of the connection between humans and nature. Built-in benches made from timber grown in a managed forest are used for sitting. The park also integrates the ecological context of the urbanscape of high rise old factory buildings now also transformed into hotels, office complexes and high-end residences. How does the High Line redevelopment look through Daoist lens? The redesign of the High Line Park has retained the original spatial organization. The original infrastructure, scale, design, area and height of elevated railway have also been kept and some of the materials of the old rail line such as ties and sleepers have also been retained. Thus the new line issues from the original source of the rail line (its *Fan*).

The pedestrian walkway is constructed to maintain its relationship to its old flora with additional naturalized plantings and signifies the Daoist human relationship to nature in this newly redeveloped public urban space. Trees and wooden bench seats further enhance the feeling of being in a setting close to nature amidst concrete high rise buildings. Ample public access by metro and taxis provide for the vitality of park dwellers' circulation while the park's porosity to neighborhoods ensure a steady stream of park users. Thus the High Line could be seen as a flowing stream of *qi* (energy). The diversity of the flow of people, the freedom of experiencing an exhilarating walk high above ground, and the multi-perspectival views afforded for the users as well as the multi-perspectival Views incorporated into the Line's redevelopment (ranging from users, community, designers, city planning and other authorities) show what we can call Daoist concepts and strategies working.

Thus Daoist *Re-turn* through redevelopment has made this space vital and engaging. Events and spaces are free for use and the space includes non-monumentality, lowly scale, return to original source of historical materiality and organization of spaces, multi-perspectivalism. Community and social activities both organized and spontaneous abound during various times of the day and on different days and in different seasons. The uniqueness of such a type of space is its ability to provide the experience of being on a walkway through the heart of the city at elevated height. This provides the walker with a sense of intimacy to the sensorium of the city and its urbanity through Daoist lens.

The table below show the facilities and activities associated with the High Line park following:

Access	Area	Park Furniture	Food	Transport	Activities	Vicinity
Elevators	Length: 1 and half miles	Concrete benches	Restaurants	Metro Lines 14, 23 & 34	Organized shows& art installations	Parks nearby
Stairs	Width: 40 feet	Wood benches & lounges	Cart vendors	Taxis	Picnics	Residential neighborhood
ADA		Street lamps		Pedestrian footpaths	Strolling	Hotels
				Bike lanes	Sitting	Art district
					People watching	Restaurants

As can be seen from the above table, the High Line also has many features and facilities to attract users to the park. There is easy access to the Line from the neighborhoods through adjacent streets for pedestrians and also for bicyclists. It is also well served by metro lines which stop at various access points. The park ensures that users have ample park furniture for resting and sitting around besides an abundance of plants and trees which add to its attractiveness and comfort from tree shades in the heat of summer. Food and restaurants are sited within easy distance and also right in the buildings beside the line. Both organized and spontaneous activities occur and there is also performing spaces for live performances and art installations.

This park is offers a unique place for city dwellers to relax within the heart of the city while they enjoy spectacular and close-up views of the city. The opening of the second section in July 2011 means that there is now more space for people to use and for events to happen. The cultural wealth of the neighborhoods including the art district of Chelsea and the ethnic shops and restaurants of Hell's Kitchen also draws a diversity of different kinds of people including artists and workers to the park. Nearby is the West side of Broadway and the entertainment district which is another pool of people who stream to the park.

Thus Daoist *Re-turn* through redevelopment has made this space vital and engaging. Events and spaces are free for use and the space includes a multi-perspectival, low scaled park harking back to the original source of historical materiality (*Fan/Fu*) and organization of spaces. The park caters to community and social activities. It is also a unique place which links people to nature amidst a sophisticated context of high rise buildings through the heart of the city at an elevated height giving a sense of intimacy to the experience of the city. Through Daoist lens it appears to alleviate the crisis of urbanity not only by augmenting the public open space in New York's West Manhattan but also redeveloping an attractive park open to a diversity of usage and events.



Plants on the High Line between rail tracks: Nature and the Return (*Fan*)

Long-term plans for the park, to host temporary installations and performances of various kinds have been commissioned. In 2010 summer a sound installation by Stephen Tiello composed of noises heard throughout New York was presented. Another installation which comprises digital pictures taken every minute of the Hudson River has also been presented. Other activities included dance events and kids' exploration of the park.

The first public park of its kind, the High Line is built 30 feet above Manhattan's West Side and costs \$152.3 million, including design, demolition and construction. Funding includes \$112.2 million from the City, \$20.3 million and \$400,000 from the State. The remaining funds have been privately raised. The first section costs \$86.2 million.



The High Line at 20th Street, looking downtown, an aerial greenway: the vegetation recalls the wild plants that had colonized the abandoned railway before it was repurposed: The Daoist *Re-turn*

Impact of the adaptive re-use of the railway High Line into an urban park has influenced real estate development in the neighborhoods that lie along the line. More than 30 projects by 2009 were planned under construction in the nearby neighborhoods to usher in a renaissance.



The High Line above 23rd Street (taken from *New York*, June 2011: 115)

There has been extraordinarily low crime rate in the park. This has been attributed to the high visibility of High Line from the surrounding buildings, a design future inspired by the writings of urbanist Jane Jacobs who said that, "Empty parks are dangerous. Busy parks are much less so. " Park safety also ensures that it is well used and being well used ensures in turn safety to use the park.



**The new Whitney Museum by Renzo Piano at the end of the second section of the High Line
(taken from *Architecture Record* July 2011: 145)**

The High Line has attracted three million annual visitors, 10 times what the founders of the conservancy initially envisioned. However, wear and tear, as well as educational programming, is a constant challenge for the 60-member staff and the annual operating costs for the park come to \$3 million. (*New York Times* October 27, 2011:121)

The High Line's success in New York City has inspired other cities to investigate if feasibility in replicating it including Chicago, Philadelphia and St. Louis. However James Corner one of the designers said that the High Line is not easily replicable in other cities because building a cool park requires a framework of neighborhoods around it in order to succeed.



The High Line as a City stage
(taken from *Wall Street Journal Magazine*: September 30 2011:17)

A number of film settings and television series have been set on the High Line including the film *I Am Legend* and the documentary, 'Walking the High Line'. Another impact of the High Line is the blurring of the border between the public and the private realms. Park walkers are often able to look into buildings which are built very close to the line especially some which are over the line such as HL23, a small but conspicuous apartment building by Neil Denari . This building reaches part way over the High Line like a ruined arc on an ancient road and its glass walls side up so close that passersby can practically read a magazine over a resident's shoulder.



**At the intersection of the High Line and HL 23
(taken from *New York*: July, 2011:26)**

Peeping into buildings has become a venerable metropolitan activity, according to the New York magazine, a local popular culture watchdog). “Some New Yorkers keep binoculars on the sill while others prefer the oblique view from the sidewalk. “ (New York magazine, July 2011 :26) Thus both indoors and outdoors people look at each other. So the High Line and HL23 function as balcony and stage where actors and audiences watch each other perform lives of leisure. It's much like reality TV. This is what Jacobs (in *Death and Life of Great American Cities*) would see as ‘street drama’ and what Mumford consider in terms of the city as ‘a theatre of action’. Much of this private viewing is actually staged window dressing by neighbors who are aware of passersby

on the High Line just as passersby on the High Line know that they are gazing at residents who are aware that they are being gazed at.

The New York High Line, like Shanghai's Xintiandi area, can be considered as a successful example of urban adaptive re-use. It retains the main infrastructure of the disused railway system, while re-developing the line into a pedestrian park. Like Xintiandi, it attracts both a great number of locals and visitors from other parts of the country and global tourists. Thus, it is also used by a mixed community of people who wish to enjoy both city views and leisurely strolls. Nestled within the heart of the city, it affords views of the cityscape which are both intimate with close-ups of the buildings and also a distant perspective from the 30 feet high elevation of the Line. This gives users of the Line an immersive multi-perspectival view of the city, much in the line of Daoist strategy of viewing the landscape.



Photograph taken by author, January 2011

Nature has also been introduced to the Line, originally self created and now expanded into a park, still retaining some of the wild growth. This return to the origin and its transformation encapsulates the Daoist conjunction of *Return* (Fan/Fu) and *I* (transformation). This is what can be designated as a *Re-turn* strategy that can be adopted both to acknowledge the historicity of the re-development's context and a change for more contemporary usage. The factories that once surrounded the former elevated railway have, through the decades from the 1980s, been redeveloped into hotels, office and high-end residential buildings. The re-development of the High Line obviously gives the workers and neighborhood residents a space for leisure and relaxation. Restaurants have also sprung up along the buildings which the Line passes by and through. This has in turn attracted more people to come from the rest of the city and elsewhere to use the line.



Photograph taken by author, January 2011

Walking the High Line last winter, I found a number of people also braving the cold to catch a view and more, an experience of buildings close up. These buildings appear to me less monumental and gave me a more friendly feeling towards a city I do not live in. Moreover, I gained a perspective of the city as diverse in its make-up of inhabitants and architecture. The High Line prominently reminds me of New York's historic past as a mighty industrial city. The change from that to a global financial hub has been steeply dramatic. The cosmopolitan nature of this city is matched by the sophisticated amenities which include cultural spaces and open public spaces dedicated to pedestrians such as this High Line Park. Castells has noted that cosmopolitans and the managerial elite are also attracted to a city that can provide these. It certainly makes the city more attractive and urbane to visitors and local residents alike.

Urbanity may not be at the center of Daoism, yet architects and urban designers have to heed the quality of urbanity in a city. The High Line seems to be a way of catching both the transcendent and also paradoxically multi-perspectival immersive Daoist view. It affords a space for meditation and yet a space for social activities.



Photograph taken by author, January 2011

Daoism is the only Chinese philosophy that speaks about our relationship to spaces and the rest of the world. Other Chinese philosophies are more concerned with social relations or power relations among humans. Daoism is concerned about power relationships between humans and the rest of the world – other beings, the environment and the whole ecological context or matrix. The rest of this ecological matrix would include spatial relationships between the built and the ‘natural’ environment. As architects, we need to be fundamentally concerned with the rest of the world because we are interested in spatial relationships. There is certainly a paradox in relating architecture and urban design to Daoism even as we perceive that certain Daoist concepts and strategies can be ‘useful’ for architecture and urban design.

Experiencing walking on the High Line Winter, 2011 (all photographs below taken by myself):



Looking at new high rise residences and offices from the High Line



A closer look at a very high building from the High Line



Looking at older buildings in the distance from the High Line



Looking at the street directly below



Terraced wooden audience seating for a performance space



Street views in the photographs above and below



Looking at new high rise buildings which have replaced factories



**Looking at the stepped wooden seating at the northern end of High Line
with a street view below**



Looking new office building next to an old building in Chelsea



Looking towards the south on the high line



Looking to the north



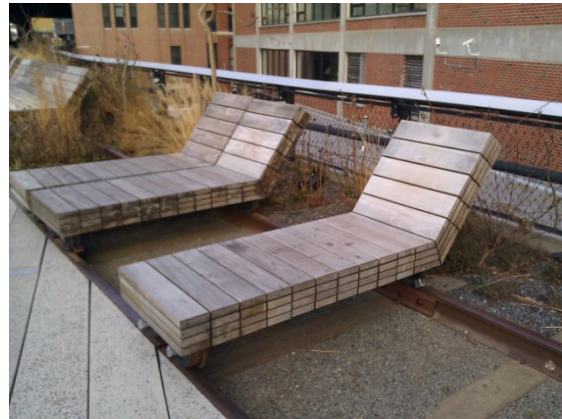
Looking east to the Hudson river pier park: tables and chairs on an extension space of the High Line



Looking east at a major street in Chelsea at the northern end of the High Line



Midway through the walk west with a view of hudson river (left) and converted warehouse (right), now an office building



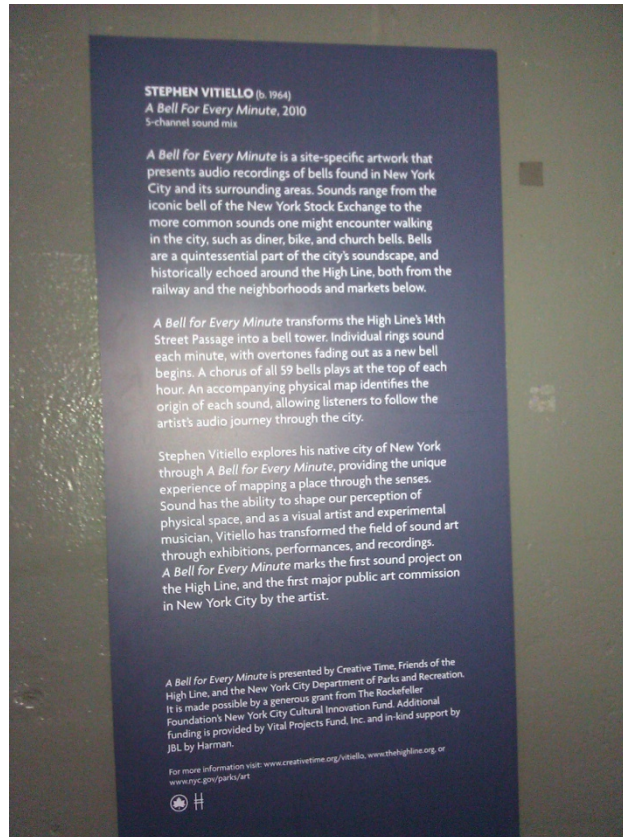
Wooden lounge seats on the high line



Pedestrian walkway



More lounging areas



Billboard for a Bell Chimes performance



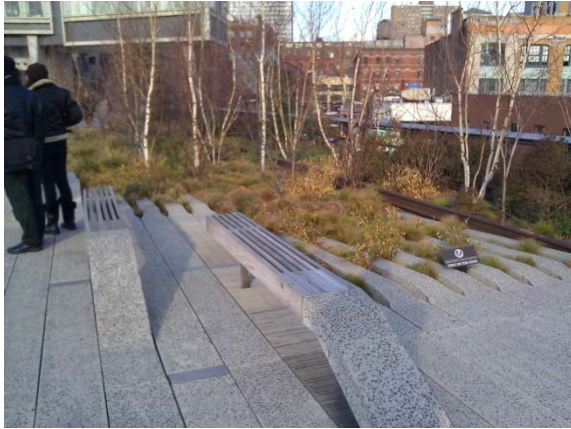
Park Entry Sign



Looking at old mixed use buildings in the Meatpacking District



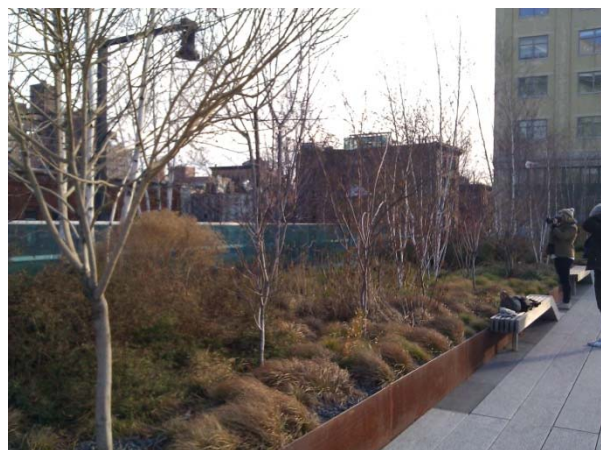
Seatings in close proximity to nature



Two photographs showing Concrete bench seatings on the High Line – too cold for an icy winter.



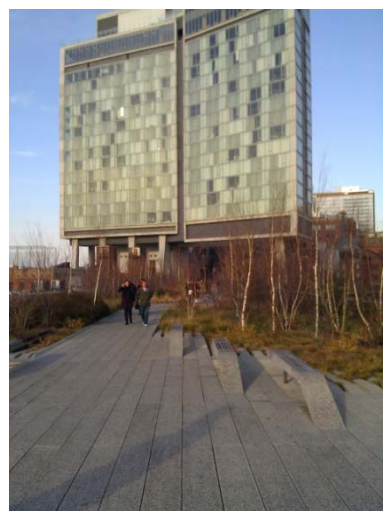
A young woman sitting on a High Line bench talking to her friend



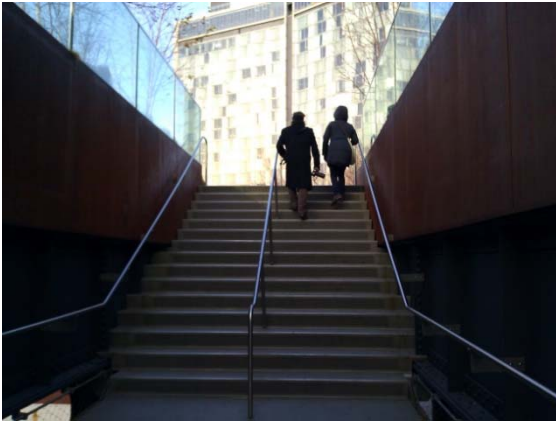
The brush growth and trees beside the pedestrian walkway on the Line



Looking at one of the few remaining meat packing factories



A close-up of the Standard Hotel



At the top of the stairs to the High Line



From the top of the Stairs looking down



Ascending stairs to the High Line



On the High Line with view of the Chrysler Building
in the distance

Conclusion:

Both Xintiandi and the High Line are good examples that show the adaptability and flexibility of the spatial organization and re-construction of urban spaces and traces the Daoist notions of *Fan* (Return) and *Yi* (Transformation). They are re-adapted

arrangements of the original spaces and infrastructures that create new useful spaces while paying homage to the past. Although both spaces are re-created for more 'genteel' usage, they also provide an opportunity for anyone living within the city (and visitors) to appropriate such spaces for their own enjoyment. The diversity of usage and users and the multi-perspectival views the latter obtain in both spaces also call to mind Daoist strategies of alleviating the crisis of urbanity. People are attracted to these spaces because they open up diversified usage for diverse users. Xintiandi provides food, leisure activities and just spaces to lounge outside and watch other people. Likewise the High Line provides a garden for strolling, benches for sitting and watching other people and the various views both close and distant of the city of New York.

These two places also provide multiperspectival and immersive urbanity through the constant flow and change of perspectives of a city for users walking and participating in the activities of these two spaces. The High Line also provides a connection to nature for its pedestrians while connecting to the built environment of the city. High-rise buildings become less monumental and this horizontal flow across the city of the Line recalls the Daoist notion of horizontality and humility towards the environment as habitat. Conceptually, both the High Line and the Xintiandi North Block complex can be thought of as strategic lines, constituting the flow of human energy which give both places their vitality and their use. In abstract terms, the strategy of Daoist flow lines can be functional as design. Below, I have abstracted the conceptual lines of both these places and used them in a different way – as lines etched in ceramic dishes (see below):



**The lines of Xintiandi connecting Daoist qi to the Shanghai
urbanscape: Ceramic dish by the author, 2011**



**The lines of the High Line connecting Daoist qi to the
New York urbanscape Ceramic dish by the author, 2011**

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Various theorists have contributed to the understanding of what is urban and urbanity. Their theories have been discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. From these theorist, especially Ventos and Pu Miao, we also gained an understanding of the crisis of urbanity. This crisis can be delineated as stemming from the effects of overcrowding in the increasingly dense populations of cities such as Shanghai and New York City. For instance, Ventos has identified the mestastizing of cities on the one hand due to overexpansion and the splitting of the city on the other due to the separation of wealth and poverty. Pu specifically identified urbanity problems of overcrowding in Asian cities leading to a shortage of adequate dwelling and living spaces and the need for more public urban spaces. He has noted that most urban public spaces are problematic since they exist as retail sprawl and the deterioration of such urban spaces because of mis-use such as peddling wares, storing private belongings and mainly monotonous visual corridors that result from over-commercialization.

The two cities discussed in this dissertation, Shanghai and New York City, have been globalized since 1930s. In the late 19th Century, Shanghai was, to a large extent, colonized by Western powers and subsequently became an international port, exporting its goods to Europe, America and the rest of Asia. Historically, both cities were industrial and manufacturing giant centers for their regions and other parts of the world. More recently, and for Shanghai, very recently, both have become financial and business

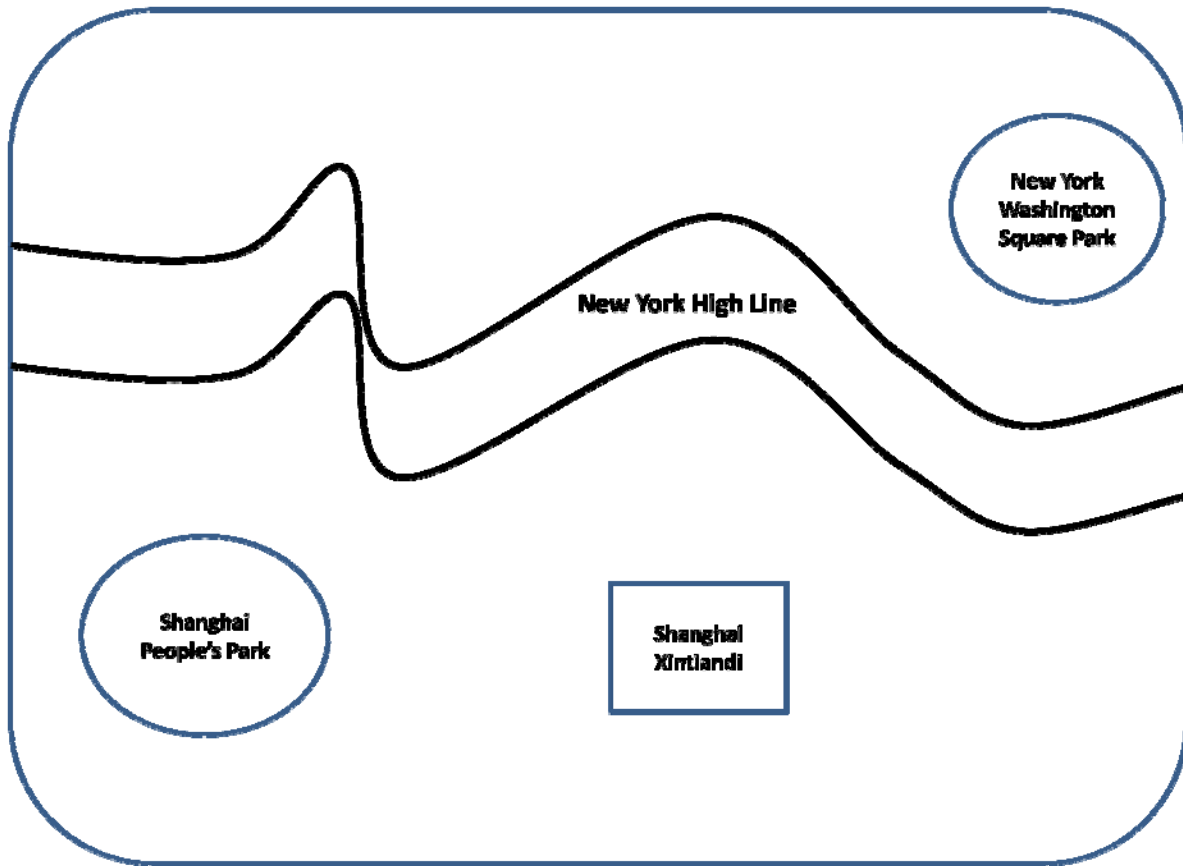
hubs linking them to a network of global centers. Shanghai and New York City are two of the most important cities in the world. They are the respective financial and commercial centers of their countries which are also the world's richest nations in terms of Gross National Product (GNP). These are extraordinarily vibrant cities as a whole, offering a diversity of complex dwellings and circulatory spaces. These spaces enable dynamic circulations and access to the business of everyday urban life. Shanghai has been referred to as the New York of the East and New York is sometimes likened as the Shanghai of the West. Both cities have huge populations, about 22 million in the metropolitan area of New York and about 19 million in Shanghai. Both absorb a great number of migrants, from the surrounding states and counties and in the case of New York, even from various countries in the world. Each city has citizens of great wealth who live in luxury and homeless people who live below the poverty line. For these cities, population growth has been exponential and in many parts of each city there has been great pressure to house and provide public spaces for its teeming denizens. Both of these cities are the global nodes of the two most powerful nations in the Asia Pacific region – The People's Republic of China and the United States of America – in the 21st Century.

This dissertation has taken on two subjects, Daoism and the crisis of urbanity, each of which by itself, is vast in scope and together, they are even larger. Since this dissertation is limited in space and time, I have attempted to look into the creative use of some Daoist concepts and strategies by narrowing its scope to study the four specific sites in the two global cities. These sites constitute cross-cultural examples that manifest the applicability of Daoist concepts and strategies in contemporary times. I

made three visits to each city during the course of writing this dissertation and each visit lasted on average for about ten days. I have previously been to these cities many times since the 1990s. In this sense this dissertation is an auto-ethnographic study from my exploration of these sites. It is auto-ethnographic because I am both the subject who observes and who also experiences. I go about the sites looking for evidence of the five Daoist concepts and strategies to see how they work. These can in-form the practice of architecture and thus constitute possibilities for theoretical interventions to alleviate the crises of urbanity pertaining to the space-making and organization through accessible, flexible, diverse, adaptable urban public open spaces. The Dao (Way) gives rise to the concept of De (Becoming in the Deleuzian sense) of 'alternative possible actualizations' (Shapiro: 2010:29). These spaces contribute to a dynamic socio-spatial vitality creating fluid connections in the city as opposed to inert, lifeless, closed fortified spaces. In my encounters with the four sites in Shanghai and New York City, the Dao (Way) signs the De (Potential Power) of the places as actualized. As Shapiro says, 'signs activate sensation and this force us to think' (2010: 31). As architects, our thinking shapes our spatial designs.

This dissertation by focusing on four different specific sites in these two cities to explore what can be said about these spaces seen through Daoist lens in turn this leads on to what can be said about the Dao looking at these cities. The five concepts and strategies culled to look at these urban sites -- the People's Square Park, Washington Square Park, Xintiandi and the New York High Line--show that more care is necessary than to

provide more or bigger urban public spaces to alleviate the crisis of urbanity. The quality of these spaces need to heed these Daoist concepts and strategies.



The four urban sites

These Daoist concepts and strategies discussed in Chapter 2 can be summed up as follows:

- Human-nature-landscape relationship in the urban context
- Adaptability and Flexibility of the spatial and volumetric organization of the built urban environment.
- Diversity of the lived and living social environment
- Multi-perspectival and immersive urbanity

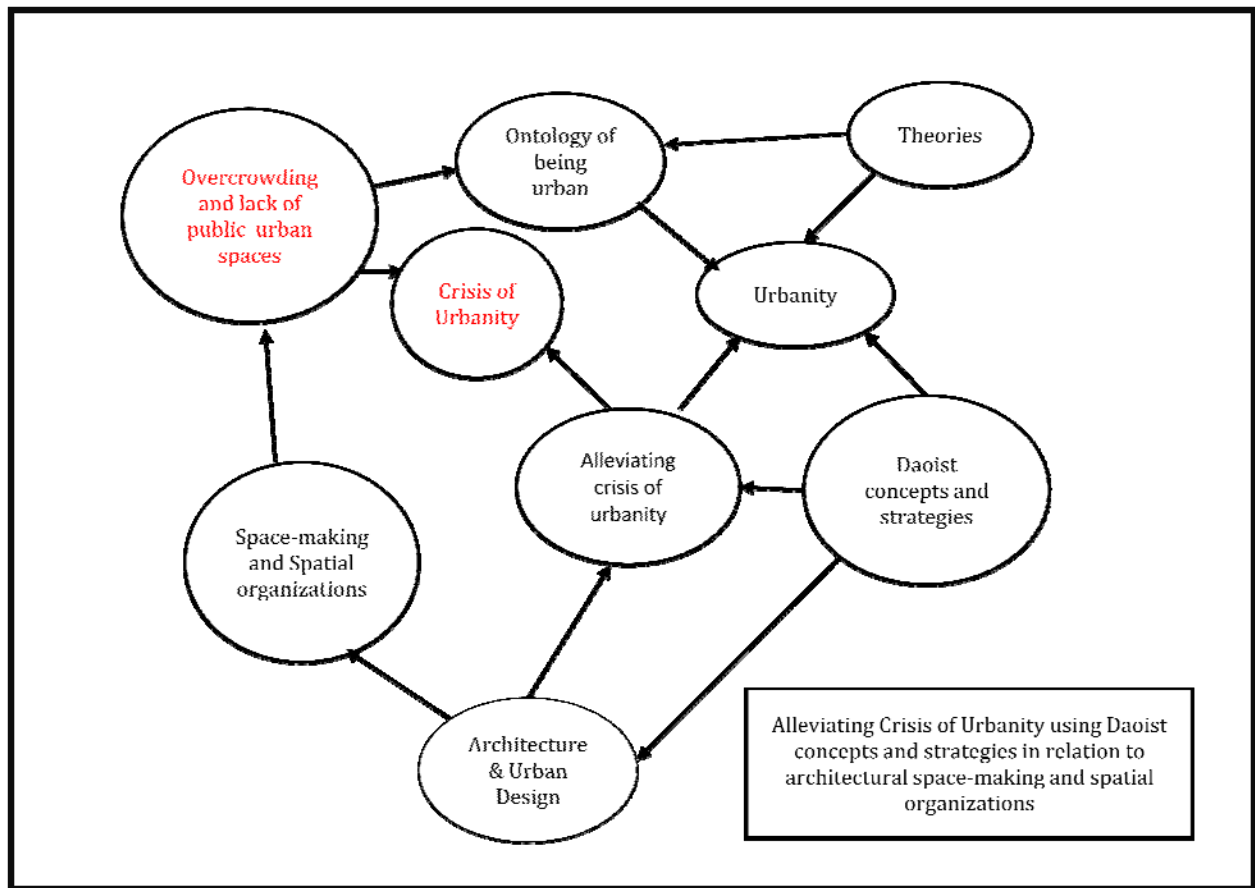
- Return (Fan/Fu) to the origin or source in conjunction with Transformation (Yi).

In Daoist terms, the crisis of urbanity can be seen as the blockage of the flow of spatial relationships. In some parts the poor quality of dwelling in the city which, because of increasing influx of people as a result of migration from other places or from the countryside, leads to overcrowding. This in turn leads to a shortage of spaces for private and public usage. As Pu Miao (2002) indicated, this means cities need more urban public spaces to alleviate this lack of spatial allocation and to provide for urban public spaces which can be used for social and leisure activities that cannot be allocated within private dwellings. More of these spaces need to be quality spaces which are open and accessible to all and cater to a wide diversity of people, usage and events. Among other things, the Dao is concerned about how to live and how to build or inhabit spaces to live, that is, to dwell as expounded by Heidegger (1959).

The four spaces discussed in this dissertation show how public urban spaces can be successful and to what extent they work in alleviating such crises of urbanity. People's Square Park (not to be confused as the whole of People's Square) in Shanghai and Washington Square Park are largely vital public urban spaces which connect humans to nature and afford users a variety of quality spaces for a range of activities from individual leisurely enjoyment to more social gatherings and events. Similarly, Xintiandi and the High Line in Shanghai and New York, respectively, also provide useful and vital spatial organizations for public use, although both may not be considered to be similar

in form or typology. Xintiandi provides a unique public space in a Chinese city modeled to some extent from a European plaza which can also be seen as the traditional empty center of Chinese built environment. The High Line provides a unique park in a Western city that connects humans to nature amidst monumental high-rise buildings. This manifests the Dao of balancing complementarities such as the high with the low. The High Line can be seen as the flow of energy bringing urban dwellers on the ground to relate to these mountainous buildings. Yet both as adaptive re-use public spaces are good examples of Daoist *Re-turn*—spaces that combine the seeds of the original source with transformation for attractive contemporary usage. Indeed the adaptive re-use strategy can actually be seen as a Daoist *Re-turn* already discussed in the Laozi more than 2,000 years ago, though it has only gained popularity since the latter half of the last century in modern Western cities.

This dissertation has attempted to relate both Western and Chinese urban theories to the crisis of urbanity and the Dao. This has been a complex and intricate exercise and can be set forth in the following diagram:



Daoism is, among other things, the philosophy of adaptability of the potential power which confers life and is part of the cycle of decay and growth inherent in and of ‘the myriad things’. Things must change (combining transformation *Yi* and power *De*) to *re-turn* or to change a turning point (‘crisis’ in Chinese means ‘turning point’) towards a favorable way. At the same time, the openness of multi-perspectivalism is a real respect for the lowly and the ecological (biophilia). People’s Square Park and Washington Square Park exemplify the vital force of the nature – human relationship in the ecological matrix. This is the sustainability of the Dao which offers a way out of the dilemma of environmental crisis and it decries environmental pessimism. For the

Daoist, preservation – a wholesale return to the past, is impossible, as past time cannot be regained. Rather it is more feasible to remember the past and honor it in transformation. At the same time, complete eradication of the past is also not feasible. The first implies freezing time and thus identity and the second implies a disregard of history or memory and erasing identity. 'Memory is built' (Till, quoted in Shapiro: 2010: 182) and therefore can be re-built. The Way implies a Re-turn that is, *Return (Fan/Fu)* transformation (*Yi*) embedded with the seeds of the original source (or 'Mother of Myriad Things'). This strategy can be seen to work forcefully in the case of Xintiandi and the High Line.

Daoist concepts and strategies, which seek to create flexible, adaptable and dynamic spaces, can be used for different space organizations as seen in the four examples. Thus it implies the importance of the fact that cities as a whole must have diversity in spatial organizations and built structures. Too many similar built environments or imitations of epochal styles and typologies can reduce the multi-perspectival views and diversity of urban spaces and buildings.

Is Daoism still relevant after over 2000 years, seeing that human habitats must necessarily change so that large-scale buildings may be needed to house the teeming millions in cities? The Dao supports the lowly or is on the side of the lowly in status. It continuously emphasizes the notion of lowliness and uses water as the lowly virtue of its ability to be useful as it is dynamic and flexible but yet has great force as it can erode

strong matter such as rock or stone. It mentions that Heaven (a creative force of Dao) is high while humans are low. Since humanity is low in comparison to Heaven, then humans must heed their lowliness or groundedness. At the same time, the Dao can encompass the high as the complementary of the lowly. The implication for architecture is that it should take the low immersive perspective of the dwellers on the ground and the contexts of the dwellings as well the transcendent view of master-planning.

The Daoist concepts and strategies are useful in in-forming both design programming for urban public spaces and their spatial organizations. They in-form architecture and built environment from the point of view of usage and of the dwellers and inhabitants of the city concerned. In this way it behooves the designers to immerse themselves in the ecological contexts of these cities. Thus Daoism speaks strongly to contemporary ecological concerns. It aligns nature with spontaneity and the self. It is thus prescient to the issue of ecological ethics in relation to architecture and the built environment.

Jane Jacobs' (1964) admonition about over-wide boulevards and tall buildings, seem to go back to the Daoist concern for immersion in multi-perspectivalism which include the viewpoints of urban dwellers, rich or poor, designers, developers and planning authorities. Mumford's city as theatre of action harks back to the dynamic qi (energy/vitality) that flows through the city. Heidegger's being and dwelling is a resonance of Dao notions of being and non-being. Amin and Thrift talks about the

rhythm of the city, its beat and flow, again like dynamic *qi*. (see Chapter 2). Thus the notions of urbanity of these theorists resonate with Daoist notions.

The Dao is ultimately about the power of space. It is about the politics of spatial relations, about the power inherent in, and of, space and how space is related to use. Who owns the space, controls the space and who dwells within the space and how to use the space and for whose benefits? At the moment, humans as a species have the greater means of controlling and using space within the ecological matrix, but this has not always been the case. The Dao is aware of the ‘myriad things’ that have a claim to space in this matrix or to nature and its resources such as water, earth and air (as breath or energy in Daoist *qi*). The Dao as ‘the Mother of myriad things’ is not benevolent to humans alone because it is equally impartial to all (myriad things) and benevolence to humans alone may jeopardize the delicate fabric of the ecological matrix within which all myriad things are related and dwell. Therefore as architects and urban designers, we can learn through Daoist lenses how space can be used and organized without being merely human-centered.

The ‘myriad things’ can be seen as existing in a complex ecological matrix and humans are only a part of this matrix which has great diversity. Daoism is about the relationship of ‘myriad things’ (all living and inanimate things) to the Way. The Way is flexible and can be invisible. The logic of Daoism is not a Cartesian logic nor is it binary. ‘I think therefore I am’ does not make sense to Dao. Do animals and plants not exist? So how

do we re-orientate our perception and understanding in order to take in other perspectives of the world we live and build?

Daoism does not state that the human perception of things or the world is the only perspective nor the 'right' one. Thus what can be culled from Daoism are some concepts which may lead to useful strategies. The Way cannot be conceived as a fixed principle (can't be named) or as a set of fixed principles. It is both a path and a process.

This leads on to a multi-perspectival way of looking. To have this, we need to immerse ourselves in a diversity of perspectives and viewpoints – not just that of the architect or urban designer or the policy makers or the people as clients and users but also from the various points of the ecological context – from nature, plants, a spot, animals, etc. Immersive multi-perspectivalism is difficult and chaotic but not to attempt this may lead to sterility, stasis, lack of qi (energy or vitality), lack of balance of opposing views and forces (yin-yang). For architects and urban designers this Immersive multi-perspectivalism can lead to a richer, more complex, and creative way of envisioning a built environment. This in turn may lead to less sterile and human-centered designs. This is conceived as a balance to totally human-centered egotistical or irresponsible designs.

Moreover, it is often stated that architecture and urban design should take into account the environmental contexts of the spaces for which they design and create a sense of place. These concepts and strategies culled from Daoism in-form an awareness of the

ecology of living in a city – a Way (Dao) of life that goes to alleviate the crisis of urbanity. It informs us on how architectural interventions can create more diverse, multiperspectival, flexible and adaptive urban environments. This set of concepts and strategies bundled together enable the power of the built urban public space as a resource for the users of these places and for the city as a whole. They help to frame a sense of place which involves both socio-cultural and physical dimensions. Critical regionalist such as Frampton, for instance, has remarked on the lack of a sense of place in international cities consisting of architectural structures which are echoes of the international style. However, they have not suggested any strategies to achieve a sense of place about from critiques of a lack of this. Daoist *qi* constitutes the conceptual trace - thus the abstract (Way) can be transformed and re-formed through the Daoist notion of *De* or the potential force of change or transformation. For instance, an old disused and discarded rail line becomes transformed by heeding its *De* and it becomes again another figure of the *Way*, it becomes a livable and enjoyable park straddling midway above the city between high-rise buildings. But it also has the potential force (*De*) of reverting or re-turning to its previous state of decay just as the rail line decayed.

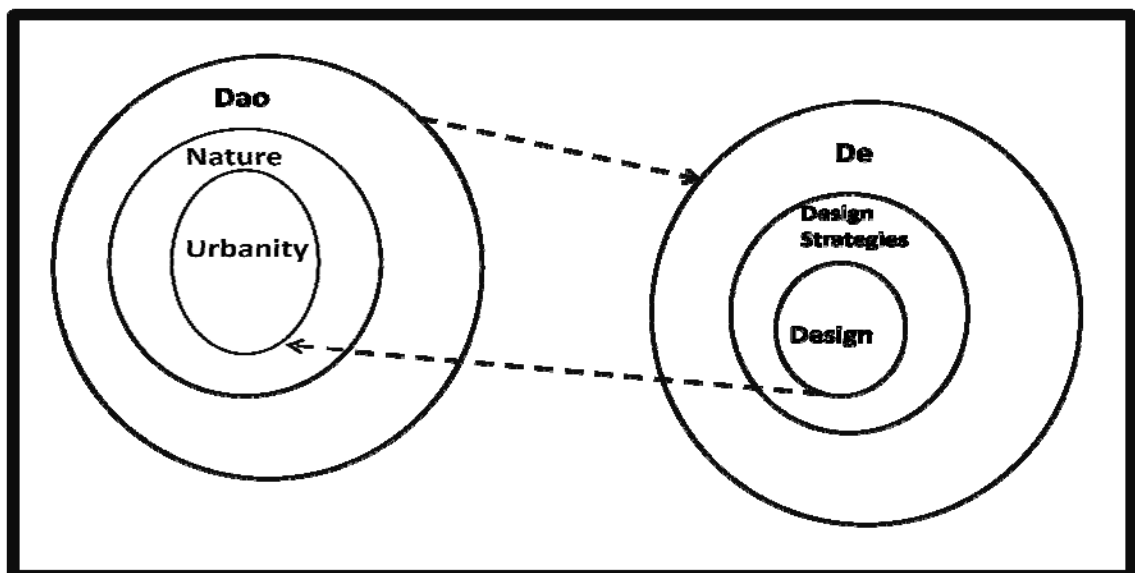
Thus the notions of *Dao* and *De* can be seen in this example as having useful concepts and strategies to apply to the alleviation of the crisis of urbanity. In other words, in urban architecture and planning design we must not forget this cycle of transformational propensity. Nothing remains in one state for a very long time. In this sense the Daoist concepts and strategies contribute to the alleviation of the crisis of urbanity stemming from such a shortage and overcrowding in city dwelling spaces, through the re-cycling

of spaces. This is the creative resourceful power that enables the architect and the designer to work on public urban spaces among other constructs.

This dissertation has proposed the following from the concepts and strategies culled from the Dao as useful design strategies:

1. Connection to nature which fosters ecological awareness;
2. Immersive multi-perspectivalism as a design perspective;
3. Physical as well as socio-cultural diversity of spatial organization;
4. Attention to the concept of flexible, adaptive multi-functional usage of any specific space
5. Attention to *Fan/Fu* (historical and cultural layers as Re-turn or adaptive re-use) which embeds history and memory.

The reciprocal connection between Dao and De to Design and the quality of urbanity can be seen as thus:



Relationship between *Dao* and *De*, Design and Urbanity

The *Dao* is the ontological power and *De* is the performative power. Both re-present power as resource for architecture and urbanity. Thus seeing *Dao* as the ontological dimension of the city allows for the performativity (*De* or becoming) of urbanity. Daoist strategies such as those discussed in this dissertation enable the production of spaces in accord with *De*, that is, the production of flexible, adaptable, diverse, vital and accessible open urban public spaces.

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